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ABSTRACT

The booklet presents information to help parents raise their gifted and/or creative preschool children. M. Sapon-Shevin and M. Shevin, in "Issues for Parents: Implications of the 'Gifted' Label," review the functions of labels, describe the educational needs of gifted children, and suggest ways in which parents can act as advocates. In "Issues for Parents: Encouraging Development of the Preschool Gifted Child," C. Steele and S. Gladden describe current evaluation approaches, summarize eight programs for gifted preschoolers, and list 20 ways to encourage the potential development of the preschool child. Guidelines for choosing appropriate programs are covered by M. Thormann In "Issues for Parents: Selection of a Responsive Preschool Program for the Gifted Child." E. Herda ("Issues for Parents: The Meaning of the 'Information Age' for the Preschool Gifted Child") presents an overview of current social and cultural changes and discusses the implications for raising gifted children in such a society. S. Perkins concludes with a discussion of emerging issues in the field of preschool gifted education. Appended material includes a resource listing for parents and fact sheets on giftedness from the Council for Exceptional Children. (CL)

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A Parent's Guide to the Education of Preschool Gifted Children

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A Parent's Guide to The Education of Preschool Gifted Children

Roberta M. Felker
Editor

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and
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Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted

MISSION STATEMENT
1982

The education of gifted and talented students is a vital and growing national concern. Our belief in the right of all individuals to a full and meaningful education has joined with our conviction that we must develop all of the talents of our people if we are to grow and prosper as a nation. These separate and compelling aims have focused our attention on the education of the gifted and talented.

Our nation has learned a valuable lesson from providing for children with special needs. It has been shown that students with varying capacities and different opportunities in life require an education which considers their needs as individuals. It can not be assumed that children enter and proceed through school with equal ease. We have learned that the traditional curriculum must be altered to accommodate differences among children. As this is true for children who struggle with the regular curriculum it is also true of those who quickly surpass it. All students must be given the chance to perform at their best, whatever that level may be.

Our nation's future depends on the capacity of our people. Recent events have taught us this simple truth. The failure of a substantial number of children to develop to their fullest must weigh heavily on our national conscience. Pasteur once said that "Chance favors the prepared mind." Our responsibility as a society is to provide the foundation upon which the next "chance" technological, scientific, artistic and humanitarian breakthroughs may occur. We must develop an educational system which values individual students and simultaneously develops the natural abilities of our people.

The public schools throughout the nation are taking on this challenge by addressing the needs of gifted and talented students. Their extraordinary capacity to learn, to think, and to perform must set the standards by which the school program is altered. We need not debate what is distinct or unique about programs for the gifted and talented as opposed to other programs. Rather we acknowledge that the important distinction is in how these students react to advanced materials and conceptual complexity in a special way which sets them apart from other children. This is a question of emphasis rather than of kind, and therefore suggests four major requirements for their educational program:

Gifted and talented students must be able to move at their own rate, regardless of chronological age or grade placement.

Gifted and talented students require a diversity of learning experiences, including instructional methods, materials and activities.

Gifted and talented students need to be challenged and stimulated in an environment that allows children of like ability to learn from one another.

Gifted and talented students require guidance in the educational programs, so that they may understand themselves and make best use of their educational opportunities.

A variety of models for serving gifted and talented children have been implemented in schools throughout the nation. Rather than espouse a single prototype, we believe that there are key elements which must be a part of any program that is to be considered of the highest quality. These are:

Broad-Based Planning. This includes teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, students, and the community at large. This planning should always be the first step in establishing a program.

An Established Process for Seeking and Assessing Students. This should be carried out regularly with a well-trained staff. The process must seek both demonstrated and potential ability, with special effort made to include students from all socioeconomic groups. The measures used to assess students should be appropriate for the ability which is being sought.

Staff Development. This includes general training for all the staff of the school. Specific training should be provided to interested staff to refine their teaching in order to work more effectively with these students. An effective and well-trained staff is the most essential element in providing for these students.

A Defined Program. This should be established and maintained as a natural part of the regular school program and should continue from primary through secondary grades on a regular and consistent basis.

A Challenging Curriculum. The elementary program should focus on the development of students as independent learners. This should include thinking and research skills and wide exposure to different areas of study. The secondary curriculum should be rigorous in content and approach and grounded in a far-sighted vision of knowledge.

A Variety of Options. These must be available within the regular and extracurricular program to encourage exploration and development of talents. These include issue seminars, mentorships, advanced courses, independent study, resource clubs, acceleration, early entrance, and career internships.

Development of All Facets of the Student's Growth. This includes the intellectual, physical, social, emotional and ethical. A comprehensive program includes providing for the child's full development as a human being, including his or her special gift.

The services which encompass these key elements may vary in style and approach without diminishing their effectiveness as long as they may be judged successfully against these requirements. Programs for these students can be justified only if they offer the highest quality of learning to match the extraordinary capacity of these student's minds.

Introduction: Perspective on the Issues

"THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH"

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years:

The early lilacs became part of this child...
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter, and the mare's foal and the cow's calf,
And the apple-trees covered with blossoms, and the fruit afterward, and wood berries, and the commonest weeds by the road...
And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that had conceiv'd him in her womb and birth'd him,
They gave this child more of themselves than that,
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him...

The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture, the yearning and swelling heart,
Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real, the thought if after all it should prove unreal,
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the curious whether and how,
Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?...

These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Whitman's theme of a century ago is still a reassuringly familiar one: parents giving their children the love and life experiences with which the children make sense of the "flashes and specks" of their own lives. But parents' search for the "right" experiences and "appropriate" education for their children has become more intense, as the pace and pressures of living have increased over the past hundred years. Children today are more likely to look upon home video games than third-month lambs, and parents are having to respond to both the advanced speed and content of the twentieth century in preparing their children to judge "what is real" in today's — and tomorrow's society.

In discussions of how best to undertake the preparation of children for the future, our society has moved increasingly toward an acceptance of and even a preference for the education of younger and younger children. Kindergarten is now an accepted part of the educational program in all 50 states, and the number of preschool and day care programs is growing rapidly in response to broad economic and social changes.

Coupled with this emphasis on the potential of the young child is a growing concern for the preschooler who demonstrates *exceptional* intellectual or creative promise. This concern is shared by many educators, parents and the general public alike, all of whom have a stake in the development of our nation's most able children.

This monograph is a direct consequence of the widespread interest in these young gifted and talented children. More specifically, it is the result of thousands of parental requests for assistance made to their State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, and to the national Gifted Child Information Hotline which has been

operated for the last two years by the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted through the National Association of State Boards of Education in Washington, D.C. Though different in specific content, these requests share the underlying concern voiced by this Hotline parent: "I've just read an article about gifted children and my preschooler seems to fit the description. Help!! What do I do now?"

The purpose of this monograph is to provide some perspectives for parents on raising their intellectually and/or creatively gifted preschool child. The content of the monograph provides information which responds to four of the questions most frequently asked by parents of gifted and talented young children:

(1) What are the implications of having a "gifted and talented" child?
(2) Should I have my gifted preschooler tested? With what tests? What do the test results mean?
(3) How can I find a good preschool for my young gifted child?
(4) What can I do to encourage my young gifted child at home?

The provision of this information is a central focus of this monograph, and each of the articles individually provides insights related to these questions. However, the articles taken as a whole give focus to some broader, equally important points:

- **First,** there are no "right" answers. An individual's sense of the best response to a situation grows out of many factors such as his or her beliefs, value system, personal resources and sense of possibilities. Thus, the authors of these articles present viewpoints only; their primary value is in the ideas they stimulate and the discussion they engender.
- **Second,** there are no "perfect" programs, teachers or family settings. No day-care center teacher or parent can stimulate, encourage, support and enhance every child, all the time. There are always compromises and trade-offs, necessitated by the demands of everyday life. Doing the best we can may be as close to "perfect" as we can get.
- **Third,** there are no "normal" children who could not benefit from the suggestions to parents offered in these articles. We cannot (nor would we want to) make definitive predictions about the future of any child—and therefore it is incumbent upon us to nurture carefully and lovingly the potential of and possibilities for *all* children.
- **Fourth,** there are no "experts" more dedicated to or informed about a young child than his or her parents. Both parents and the "experts" need to be aware of and respect this knowledge born of love and experience.

In conclusion, it is hoped that these articles provide both provocative information to assist parents in the total education of their young gifted child — and a reminder of the not-to-be-replaced role of the parents in giving of themselves to their child, "who now goes, and will always go forth every day."

Roberta M. Felker
Editor

Issues for Parents: Implications of the "Gifted" Label

Mara Sapon-Shevin and Mayer Shevin

Introduction

At a meeting of parents of children beginning a program for gifted preschoolers, one parent turns to another and asks, "When did you first notice that your child was different?" The other parent responds, "We don't think she's that different because we deal with her giftedness only about one-quarter of the time; the other three-quarters of the time we're dealing with three-year-oldness."

Most articles and books about raising a gifted child have focused on the unique properties of gifted children and their need for and right to educational services "beyond the norm." However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that gifted children share most characteristics and needs with all other children in our society.

The issues which confront parents of gifted children cannot be considered in a vacuum. This article examines parenting gifted children within the broader context of parenting in general; it examines educational services for gifted children within the context of the broader public education system; and it looks at advocacy for gifted children in the context of child advocacy.

Rather than attempting to provide definitive answers, this article identifies questions which are likely to be raised when decisions are made affecting gifted children and when programs and services are designed for these children.

1. What is the significance, for parents, of the label "gifted"?
2. What kinds of educational services should parents seek for their preschool gifted child?
3. What must be considered in choosing a program that segregates gifted children vs. choosing a program that integrates gifted and normal children?
4. When parents of gifted children want to advocate for better services, what avenues are open to them and what are the advantages and disadvantages of different strategies?

Implications of the "Gifted" Label

Most parents of children identified as gifted suspected their child's special abilities long before they were "proven" by formal testing (Ehrlich, 1982). Regardless of the fact that parents are rarely surprised by the formal evidence, the act of labeling a child brings home a variety of issues which parents must confront, and questions to which society will demand answers from the parent.

We live in a society in which one of the main topics of conversation among parents of young children is "child comparison." Parents of a young child who is formally labeled as "gifted" have probably had plenty of experience fielding questions, compliments and veiled criticisms ranging from, "Gee, your child talks so well for his age!" to "Why did you push your daughter to walk so early?" Pride in one's child may be coupled with the reluctance to seem a braggart; the question may arise as to what to say to the parent who points out that his or her child hasn't achieved some milestone by the age at which your child has.

Parents of children labeled gifted are also asked, "Do you think that there's something special that you did, or did it just happen?" Parents, and society in general, entertain a variety of theories regarding the origins of "giftedness," covering the entire continuum of the "nature vs. nurture" controversy. Although most writers on giftedness prefer to consider the heredity vs. the environment issue an open question, current social attitudes are likely to have a serious impact on social policy. For example, as Laycock points out:

> Social theorists who believe there are natural differences in mentality from the earliest years usually propose seeking out these (gifted) children and developing their talents, so that they may better serve society. This is particularly true where a complex social order — whether a dictatorship or a democracy — requires highly trained citizens. The stronger the assumption of native gifts, the earlier the search begins (p. 155).

In contrast, an environmental theory of giftedness will be likely to lead to expanded programs of enrichment and intensification for all children, particularly those perceived as not having optimum environments for cognitive (intellectual) stimulation. Such an orientation is at the basis of such programs as Head Start, for example.

Extreme examples of the environmental position are found in the writing of David Lewis (1979) and Norton and Doman (1982). Lewis states:

> Your baby was born to be brilliant. Whether or not that potential is to be achieved will depend on you. Recognizing your child's real potential is the first essential step towards realizing it. Providing the child with the environment which will allow that promise to grow into the reality of superior intellectual, creative and social abilities is both the challenge and the reward of being a gifted parent (p. 272).

Norton and Doman, in discussing the program of the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential, state:

> Given the proper informational, social, nutritional, and emotional nourishment (e.g., speaking, understanding, reading, writing), most children are capable of functioning at the level which is called gifted (p. 249).

> Differences in specific abilities do exist between children, but our impression is that these differences are due more to the time and desire which parents have to apply to the program, rather than to innate differences between the children (p. 254).

On the positive side, such arguments suggest a hopeful outlook on the potential for all children to achieve, and may encourage parents to enrich the environment for any child. However, by suggesting that "giftedness" is an achieveable goal for all children, these authors leave no alternative to parents whose children do not all "make it" to gifted but to consider themselves failures as parents.

Regardless of one's opinion about the nature/nurture continuum, the reality for many parents centers around a specific child who has been labeled as "gifted." In books and articles about education for children with handicaps or other learning problems, much has been written about the dangers of labeling children. A label such as "retarded" can become a stigma or mark on the child that prevents everyone, including the child, from appreciating the child's normal and exceptional qualities and from working to strengthen the below-normal abilities. A label like "disturbed" can become a self-fulfilling prophecy when everyone, including the child, expects and excuses disturbed behavior because the child has been so labeled. Labels often become barriers to successful social interactions and appropriate educational programs.

Clearly the label "gifted" differs from disability labels in several substantial ways. To begin with, it is considered a positive label, one which credits either a parent's heredity or child-rearing practices with having created a success. As such, it is a label many parents are happy and proud to see attached to their child, in contrast with labels such as "retarded," "disturbed," or "disabled."

The word "gifted" is nonetheless a label — a word which holds significant meaning and implications for the listener. It is important, therefore, to identify some of the dangers involved in its indiscriminate use, if for no other reason than to make parents sensitive to the power of language and its potential for affecting how their child is viewed and treated.

1. **Labels lead to over-generalization and over-simplification.**
   The use of a single word ("gifted") to describe a child contributes to the assumptions and stereotypes which many associate with the term. Parents must be wary of their own and others' use of "gifted" as the lone descriptor of their child. Contrast the statement, "My child is gifted" with "My child is brown-eyed, athletic, friendly, artistic, energetic and cheerful." A label

fails to communicate the many dimensions that make up a person and contributes to a narrow view of children based on a single feature (such as I.Q. scores).

2. **Labels can be used as explanations and excuses that prevent us from helping a child.**
   Every child's day is filled with a wide range of activities. The same child who is dedicatedly stacking blocks one moment will be leaping from the coffee table the next, and two minutes later may be telling an elaborate story about an imaginary friend.

   In its best use, a label such as "gifted" can be used as a sort of shorthand way of characterizing some of the things a child is observed to do. However, behavioral labels such as "gifted" often take on a separate reality, and come to be seen as *explanations* accounting for a child's behavior.

   For example, a parent may hesitate to intervene when a "gifted child" starts to bully an older brother. "He's probably doing that because he's so gifted...he needs to take the lead." Seeing every behavior in which a child engages as related to his or her giftedness, or excusing inappropriate behavior because it is "caused" by giftedness, is a mistaken interpretation of the label and is likely to lead to mistaken child-rearing practices which focus unnecessarily on the child's giftedness to the exclusion of other characteristics.

3. **Labels can lead to stereotypical predictions and expectations.**
   Another issue which parents of a child labeled as gifted must confront is "What should I expect from my child?" Parents are confused about reasonable short-range expectations and concerned about a child's long-range future as well. When one's child is labeled as gifted, all of the normal answers to "What should my x-year old child be doing now?" are called into question.

   In terms of relationships with other people, maturity, handling frustrations, and self-help skills like brushing teeth or buttering bread, the parent of the gifted child may wonder whether to expect the child to perform according to the child's real (chronological) age, mental age, or some other factor. "My three-year-old is throwing tantrums just like the three-year-old kid across the street — but my kid has a mental age of six years, four months. Should I be worried?"

   For some parents, there may be a fear of "pressuring" children into activities and experiences the child is not ready for. Lewis (1979) states:

   > Parents sometimes say to me: "I don't want my child to be especially gifted, only happy or well adjusted." This makes it sound as if they are being offered only two alternatives — giftedness or happiness (p. 157).

   Either intentionally or without meaning to, parents may direct their "gifted" children according to a set of ideas about "what gifted children are like." Children labeled as gifted may then have a relatively small set of choices presented to them by their parents and surrounding society.

In general, parents of children labeled as "gifted" must guard against viewing their children in narrow, one-dimensional ways. It is the responsibility of parents of gifted children to make sure that their children are viewed and treated as "children, first — gifted, second." Gifted children have the "right" to be naughty, to run around on playgrounds with other children their own age, and to engage in the full range of childhood activities.

Educational Choices: Segregation vs. Integration

Probably the most pressing *practical* decision parents of gifted pre-schoolers face is determining what kind of educational programs they should choose or create for their child. Within this decision is the hotly-debated issue of whether or not parents should choose a segregated program (one specifically for gifted children) if one is available.

One of the strongest reasons why parents may choose a segregated setting is their belief that their child's needs will not be met in the typical classroom. Three features common to many school programs can be identified as barriers to a good education for gifted children:

1. A lack of acceptance of individual differences by teachers and staff;
2. Teacher's inability to teach all students well when faced with a group of children who have different needs;
3. An atmosphere of competition which emphasizes individual differences, leading to difficulty for the gifted child in making friends.

These same three factors are often cited as problems in successfully integrating handicapped and disabled children. Schools can be criticized for failing to deal with the children on both ends of the spectrum.

In considering the educational alternatives which exist for gifted children, it is important to discriminate between solutions chosen by parents because they are ideal, and solutions chosen because there seem to be no alternatives. Given a choice between a regular educational program plagued by some of the weaknesses described above, and a segregated program designed specifically for gifted children, many will choose the segregated program. The assumptions which underlie such a decision must be examined carefully however.

Assuming that regular education is inevitably geared toward "the norm," unaccepting of individual differences, and competitive leads to a second assumption that programs for the gifted will avoid these same pitfalls. Both of these assumptions must be challenged. It is possible for an educational setting to be designed to meet the needs of a wide range of children *including* the gifted. Although there are many conceivable designs, the following scenarios describe important, minimal features of such a program:

1. **Acceptance of individual differences:**
   An accepting attitude would pervade the classroom and would be obvious through the teacher's behavior and the curriculum. Individual differences regarding race, sex, and ethnic origin as well as differences in educational ability would be dealt with in a positive and realistic manner. The teachers and staff would know what the school is teaching *all* children regarding their questions about individual differences (Why is Bill in a wheelchair? How come Sharon reads so much better than everyone else?).
2. **Multi-level teaching:**
   The classroom would be organized in such a way that individual needs are met while still maintaining a group atmosphere that allows interaction among all class members in both instructional and informal activities.
3. **An atmosphere of cooperation rather than competition:**
   The school would avoid emphasizing competitiveness and constant comparison among students. Working together, cooperation and sharing, and helping each other to learn and to do would be prominently featured. There would be no star charts on the walls or other graphic demonstrations of who is best or worst at some activity. Teachers would eliminate both comparative terminology ("George wrote the best story in the class") and competitive activities such as spelling bees and other contests (Johnson and Johnson, 1978).

Classrooms characterized by the features described above are likely to be far more conducive to providing the educational experiences needed by all children, including the gifted (Reynolds and Birch, 1977; Dirkes, 1981).

The second assumption must also be challenged, i.e., that all gifted programs automatically avoid the pitfalls described earlier and contain all the positive elements which parents seek, and that therefore any program for the gifted must be better than all the available "regular" education programs. Parents must carefully investigate programs for the gifted to see if they contain the elements parents consider to be most important. The label of "gifted" on an educational program does not guarantee its suitability for one's child.

Even if one is able to locate an "ideal" program for the gifted at the elementary level, many of these programs are designed to provide only *limited* services—one hour a day or three times a week. Therefore, it is still important to look at the *overall* educational program which includes the gifted component. If gifted students will be spending a significant amount of time within the regular classroom, it is important to consider the quality of education being offered to all students within that classroom. Treffinger (1982) notes:

> We are becoming less concerned with selecting a small, special group or an arbitrary percentage of gifted students and becoming more concerned with providing many options to maintain challenging opportunities for a diverse group of students. Gifted education is becoming more and more concerned with meeting students' needs and less concerned with developing a rationale for selecting or excluding students from various programs or activities (p. 268).

In the area of *preschool* gifted education in particular, we often find that the goals of a quality gifted preschool program are very similar to the goals of any quality preschool program. The Developmental Psychology Laboratory Preschool at the University of Washington operated under the following general principles:

> (1) children have a natural desire to learn, which is maximized when new experiences are optimally matched with the individual child's previous experiences and existing level of understanding; (2) although young children can learn by quietly watching and listening, many ideas are best learned when children have opportunities for active involvement — for touching, talking, and testing on their own; (3) a child's performing a particular behavior is affected by the intrinsic consequences, and behavioral models of teachers and other students; and (4) children learn from each other — they learn skills by observing each other, and they communicate information to one another (Klein and Lyon, 1982, p. 289).

It would be difficult for any reader familiar with preschool education to regard those goals as unique to a program for gifted children and different from the goals of a quality preschool program. This can only be said, however, about *quality* preschool programs — those which meet the needs of young children, regardless of whether those children have been labeled as "gifted."

Beyond meeting the day-to-day educational needs of one's own child, it may be difficult for some parents of gifted children to see the importance of their concern for the "regular" education program. A case can be made for this concern on three levels.

1. Parents of gifted students are still part of the general community of parents, with whom they share numerous other concerns—such as safe neighborhoods and playgrounds. Isolation which is interpreted as "those parents only care about the gifted program — they don't care about the rest of the school" is likely to stand in the way of successful cooperation in solving other educational and social problems.
2. Much is communicated to our children by the actions we take on their behalf. Gifted children are likely to be keenly aware of questions and controversies surrounding their education. A concern for civic responsibility and for the lives of others can be communicated to children through parent

involvement in broad-based activity directed toward improving the education of *all* children.

3. Society ultimately pays the cost of educational systems which fail: crime, unemployment and apathy are social ills which affect all of us. A concern for improving the general education system (as well as programs for the gifted) can be seen as a moral obligation.

In an article entitled, "The Alpha Children: California's Brave New World for the Gifted," Weiler (1978) describes a program in which the gifted are provided with rich, varied, creative learning activities in view of, but excluding, all the other children. In this program, the gifted children build gingerbread houses, make movies, publish a newspaper, take trips, build rockets and produce plays while their peers fill out endless dittos and worksheets. Although this may represent an extreme example, the issue is an extremely serious one. Fenstermacher (1982) writes in response to a collection of articles on educating gifted learners that:

> Many of the authors in this collection argue for special instructional treatment of the gifted, particularly the provision of freedom, encouragement, support, openness, humor, and a broad range of challenging materials and resources. By an unintentional implication, the average and below average learners are left to fend with the absence or minimal presence of these instructional treatments. On what grounds can the provision of special instructional and curricular treatment to the gifted be defended? Many of the characteristics determined effective for the gifted learner are also quite obviously effective for the average and below average learner. Are the gifted to receive these resources because they are more able to profit from them? No one argues this way, as it is recognized that the average and below average may also profit greatly from these same resources...
>
> On the basis of common sense and accumulated experience in the teaching of children, it seems clear enough that many of the curricular and instructional treatments thought appropriate for the gifted learner also are deserved by all other learners (p. 301).

This is not to argue simply that all children should receive identical treatment; the question is a complex one. In an article entitled, "The Pursuit of Excellence Is Not Elitism," Olstad (1978) argues that:

> There is a difference between providing an equal *education* for all students and providing an equal *opportunity* for all students to acquire an education commensurate with their abilities. The gifted program provides them with opportunities to exercise their potential that often would not be possible if there were no such school program (p. 188).

This argument is debatable on several grounds. First, a child's true potential is never fully known and it is difficult to separate potential from performance. One could argue that *all* children have the potential to achieve at a higher level than their current performance. Second, while providing special services to the gifted does not by definition *deny* these services to the non-gifted, Fenstermacher (1982) argues that the special opportunities provided to the gifted lead to a situation in which "attention to rote, low-order questions, dittoed work sheets, and textbook exercises become appropriate for the less able in the very recognition that it is inappropriate for the more able" (p. 302).

This debate is not easily resolved. The Marland Report (1972) makes statements concerning the necessary uniqueness of programs for the gifted, *i.e.*, "Is a good program for the gifted a good program for all children?... No. If the program were good for all children, it would not be good for the gifted" (p. 27). In the same report, a favorable light is cast upon the general applicability of features of gifted programs.

> As educators study and evaluate various arrangements for children with exceptional learning needs such as the gifted, they learn of their value and may employ them in other ways. Schools which have used open time for even primary gifted children to pursue research interests have found that similar freedom, at less abstract levels, appeals to other children. Where teachers have had special preparation, they have reported that programs have made them better teachers for all children (p. 104).

Parents must be concerned both with the appropriateness of the education their gifted child is receiving and with the effects of the gifted program on the rest of the school. Gifted children will often be a part of the regular program for at least part (if not *most*) of their day and are thus affected by the quality of the program. Also, gifted children are a part of the larger school community and their parents are also part of that community and should share with its other members a concern for social justice and responsibility.

Another aspect of the segregation/integration question is that of friendships and social adjustment. There are some who argue that segregated programs produce snobby, elitist children who view themselves as "better" than other children (Gray, 1979). Others argue the reverse, that by being grouped with their *true* peers, gifted children are less likely to develop feelings of superiority and elitism (Marland, 1972).

The social consequences of segregated programs will depend to a large extent on how they are organized, labeled, and described to the children, parents, teachers and administrators. In the same way that the stigma for handicapped children of receiving special services depends on the organization, tact, and sensitivity of the school program, specialized services for gifted children can lead to their recognition as being different, ("Billy goes to the special room because he's working on some things he needs to learn") or as better, ("Susy gets to go to the special room because she's one of our smartest students").

It is also important to recognize that gifted children's attitudes toward their own abilities and those of other children, and their propensity for comparing themselves to others also is shaped by *parental* attitudes and behavior. A concern for labeling and language has become a major focus in the area of education for the handicapped. Educators and parents have been urged to see handicapped children as children first, handicapped children second, and to talk about a "six year old boy with a visual impairment" rather than a "blind boy." Equal sensitivity must apply to education of the gifted. Although parents are clearly more willing to publicly label their child as "gifted" than as "retarded," and are less likely to see the dangers of repeated references to their "gifted child," labels of whatever type can actually stand in the way of certain friendships or can hurt some children's chances of being accepted as individuals.

One of the major arguments advanced in favor of mainstreaming (integrating handicapped with typical students) has been the beneficial effect on achievement and behavior produced by exposing retarded students to the greater intellectual stimulation and more appropriate role models provided by typical students. In contrast, the role of the gifted child as "monitor" or "demonstrator" is generally considered to be inappropriate, a violation of the gifted student's right to an education and to healthy social interaction with classmates. Cushenberry and Howell (1974) write:

> This is a dubious practice in which the bright child is used to assist other students with questions or difficulties or to help the teacher with record keeping and similar tasks. The youngster is kept busy and other children may profit from the extra help provided, but it cheats the gifted one from developing his abilities and interests (p. 48).

Parents and teachers must clearly be sensitive to the abuse of gifted children when they are used exclusively as assistant teachers or paper graders; from another perspective, however, one of the goals often cited for gifted children is the development of leadership skills and social responsibility (Ehrlich, 1982; Sisk, 1982). Non-exploitive use of gifted children as occasional peer tutors or as participants in cooperative learning groups can be seen as exciting possibilities for developing such leadership.

Decisions about placement and educational programs for gifted children must take into account the fact that a gifted three-year-old, despite exceptional skills, is still a typical three-year-old in many ways. Parents and schools should consider ways of challenging the child's capabilities without neglecting ways of meeting the needs of that child that are just like those of *all* three-year-olds.

Advocating for Gifted Children

Like all parents, parents of children identified as gifted want the best for their children — the most appropriate education, the best preparation for adult life, the greatest respect and help for a child's particular talents. On local, state and national levels, organizations such as the American Association for Gifted Children and the National Association for Gifted Children provide parents with an opportunity to work together to create services that meet their children's needs.

Any parent advocating for the needs of his or her child must make some strategic decisions concerning how narrowly focused that effort should be. "Should I attempt to make changes which will apply to my child, or should I try for changes that will affect the other children in the class as well? Should I be working for changes which will be felt throughout the school district?"

There are advantages and disadvantages to both broad and narrow approaches. Working for broad changes means confronting systems and their reluctance to change, but provides the advocate with allies who can work together for change with the strength of numbers. Narrow changes sometimes can be effected easily, even casually—"It's not policy, but we'll make an exception in your case "—but such casual gains also can be reversed or reduced easily and quickly.

Parents banding together in local advocacy organizations for gifted children face a similar issue of how broadly to define the goals of their group. At least three levels of objectives can be pursued by such advocacy groups:

1. Effecting changes for gifted children — better identification of the gifted, the creation of enrichment programs, finding and employing teachers with special training in working with gifted children, etc.
2. Effecting changes for all children with "special needs" (gifted, handicapped, disadvantaged) — improving diagnostic services, increasing funding for special services and resource teachers, limiting class sizes in all special programs, etc.
3. Effecting changes in the quality of education for *all* children in the school system — instituting smaller class sizes and flexible, interest-related programming, access to community resources, teacher training and administrative support to foster individualization for all students, etc.

Beyond the general pros and cons of "working large" and "working small" mentioned above, the types of coalitions and alliances which advocacy groups for the gifted make will influence their objectives. An organization focusing exclusively on services for the gifted can base its advocacy on the particular "lack of fit" which gifted children experience in typical classes, on the "wasted resource" of gifted children going unchallenged, and on the threat of highly desirable children and families withdrawing to more congenial educational settings. Such an approach has the advantage of seeking small, limited changes, advocated for by a tightly-knit group of activist parents. The weakness of this approach is

that it is subject to accusations of elitism, and is vulnerable in times of budgetary crisis.

An approach which advocates for the gifted within the context of special education can base its advocacy on the needs of all children who depart significantly from the norm for which schools supposedly exist; curriculum inappropriate to their special needs can be shown to be a stumbling block for these children. Advocates for both the gifted and handicapped have demanded that educational services for their children not be based on preconceived notions and stereotypes, but rather on each child's individual needs.

Organizations representing disabled children have an excellent history of success. This offers a distinct advantage to parents of gifted children when they ally themselves with parents of disabled childen. These organizations have experienced success in setting objectives and mobilizing to meet those objectives, in addition to having a good deal of momentum and sophistication in getting laws enacted and in winning lawsuits.

The disadvantages which some advocates for the gifted find in allying their efforts with organizations advocating for services for handicapped children lie in their fear that, when it comes time to "divide up the pie," the gifted may end up with the smallest piece. Mitchell (1981b) points out that handicapped children have legal and procedural safeguards guaranteeing their services which are not necessarily available to gifted children. She also points out that tactics of confrontation and playing on society's guilt for past abuse, tactics which have often been successful in obtaining services for disabled children, are likely to be of little use in advocating for services for gifted children (1981a).

Aubrecht (1981) finds that it is more difficult for organizations representing gifted and disabled children to work together when they must compete for the same funds. However, she describes how such advocacy groups have worked together successfully in North Carolina. Parents of handicapped children rallied behind gifted education when it was to be excluded from a new state budget, even though this meant that various categories of handicapped children would each receive proportionately less money. According to Aubrecht:

> *The rationale behind this decision was simple: working together, proponents of special education for all exceptional children can do more than proponents for individual categories of exceptional children can do separately* — especially if they must compete with each other. If the legislature excluded one category this time, which category might they exclude the next time? In the end, gifted children were added to this budget, and the total amount funded was increased by more than twenty-five percent (p. 39).

A third approach, one which advocates change for all children within a school system, could base its efforts on principles which have been called for by Fenstermacher (1982):

> . . . a sound theory of entitlement, which states what any learner is entitled to in the way of curricular and instructional resources, solely on the basis that he or she is a learner. Once the entitlements of any learner are clearly set forth, then, and only then may we begin to entertain justification for additional entitlements for the gifted learner (p. 301).

Such an approach could demand that each child within a school system be dealt with as a unique case, a startling and precious combination of strengths, needs, interests and potential which cannot be adequately served in the context of an educational assembly line. In terms of curriculum, advocacy for all children can seek flexibility in programming, innovative educational resources, greater parent involvement in decision-making, and the allocation of enough funding to permit education to take place in appropriately nurturing and stable environments.

There are obvious disadvantages to the pursuit of such an approach as the sole avenue of advocacy for gifted children. To question the way in which a system meets the needs of the main body of children which it is mandated to serve is to confront simultaneously the entire educational and legislative establishment of a given community. The changes being called for are at the most basic and far-reaching levels: every participant in the educational system is, potentially, being asked to make changes in what he or she does. In the unlikely circumstances that parental pressure for such far-reaching changes *is* successful, the gifted preschooler who was the parent's incentive for working for change may be on his/her way to high school before the changes begin to be seen.

The most realistic strategy may be a two-pronged approach — one which advocates for specific short-range changes for gifted children in addition to broader, more comprehensive changes. At its best, the gifted education movement can function as a catalyst for overall change, forcing educators and administrators to confront the individual needs of all children.

There is little evidence for the advantages of advocating for gifted children in the context of advocating for all children. Authors who have written on advocacy for the gifted have, by and large, been silent on this issue. This fact should not discourage advocates for the gifted from broadening their advocacy base, however. The movement of education for the gifted prides itself on its foresight, its grounding in futurist studies (Sellin and Birch, 1981). On this basis, the "long haul" called for by this kind of advocacy is not beyond the movement's grasp.

Conclusion

In the early stages of any advocacy movement (Civil Rights, Women's Liberation, etc.), as it begins to grow and strive for social legitimacy, it will most likely focus on the unique needs of group members and their particular history of discrimination or mistreatment. In their later stages, movements for change often attempt to go beyond the tactic of pleading for a special interest group and seek to identify the ways in which the special issues they address are part of broader, human issues.

Ultimately, the only way we can guarantee that our schools meet the needs of gifted children is to work towards the establishment of educational systems in which *all* children are treated as individuals and maximum resources are devoted to helping every child reach his or her full potential.

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Issues for Parents: Encouraging Development of the Preschool Gifted Child

Connie Steele and Sue Gladden

General Considerations

In our complex world, parenting is a difficult task. When parents suspect that their child is exceptional because the child demonstrates unusually capable behaviors and language, parents often need help in coping with and in facilitating their child's precocious development.

Of course, the question could be asked, "Why is it necessary to be aware of a child's giftedness or talent? After all, if the child is "ahead" of others in identifiable ways, isn't that enough?" The answer is an unqualified, "No! That isn't enough—for most individuals." Giftedness is abnormality, exceptionality—and our society socializes toward conformity. Being different poses problems.

If a very able child (or adult, for that matter) is consistently not provided with the intrinsic reward that comes from competently handling challenging tasks, within a very short time that individual will be bored. If the environment does not offer opportunities for problem-solving, creative thinking, fluency and elaboration, the gifted person will seek these challenges elsewhere or will become inattentive and uncommitted to tasks that are accomplished too readily. Support for such a view comes from the following reports:

- In 1967, the State of Pennsylvania studied high school dropouts and found that 27.8 percent had IQ scores of 120 or above (Axford, 1971). Equivalent population distribution would have been approximately ten percent.
- The National Science Foundation has reported that youth in the top ten percent of IQ scores failed "to prepare themselves for the high level pursuits that would otherwise be available to them" (Axford, 1971).
- In 1981, the Phil Donahue Show called attention to the tragic fact that our nation's gifted and talented adolescents have a higher rate of suicide than other segments of the population (Transcript #01161, 1981).

Obviously, we need to find ways to encourage gifted and talented children to maximize their potential. If we can begin that focus early in life, perhaps later trauma could be avoided and the potential for abundantly productive lives enhanced.

Giftedness— What Is It?

Perhaps the phrase, "It's all relative," most appropriately applies to the term "giftedness," as we now use it. What is really being described is a level of capability of an individual in a given area or areas--intellectual, creative, specific academic, leadership, or in the performing and visual arts—that is (or has potential for being) demonstrated at a significantly higher level than is being demonstrated by ninety-five percent of other human beings. Obviously, if all humans perform at any time at the higher levels of behavior previously attributed to the "gifted," that individual only would be "gifted" if performing at *still* significantly higher levels than the other ninety-five percent. So, by definition, "gifted and talentedness" only occurs as such capabilities can be compared to the "average" or "normal" levels of the rest of the population at a given point in time. The yardstick for "giftedness" depends, then, on the methods for determining what is "normal."

Though a number of human characteristics may be compared in order to discover who is gifted, current thinking relies primarily upon the measure of a single characteristic—intelligence. An individual's measured intelligence quotient (IQ) usually determines educational placement or non-placement in the category of "gifted." The score selected for placement varies. For some programs it may be 130; other programs may select 125 or 160 as their "cut-off."

Probably the major reason why few efforts have been made to identify young children as gifted is that the instruments for measuring the intelligence quotient of children below the age of five years have been considered to be unreliable and not predictive of the IQ five to ten years later. This lack of prediction of giftedness from early years to later years as sometimes reported (Willerman & Fiedler, 1977) may indicate flaws in the validity and reliability of the test; it also may be due to the child's lack of continued achievement.

Impact of the Home

The family and the home environment are without doubt, the single most significant influences in the young child's life. On the whole, parents provide many and varied opportunities for learning, including encyclopedias and other books and magazines; cultural and artistic activities; lessons in music, foreign languages, art and typing; organizational opportunities such as scouting; and travel (Cheyney, 1962). Research indicates that children who are early readers (before first grade) almost invariably have had a wide variety of pre-reading experiences with parents or siblings (Plessas & Oakes, 1964).

The literature from Plato to the present asserts that human potential (of both gifted and normal children) is most promoted during the preschool years (Sanderlin, 1979). Sanderlin quoted Fitzhugh Dodson, psychologist, educator, founder of La Primera Preschool, and consultant in 1970 for Head Start:

> ...the more intellectual stimulation you can give your child in the first five years of his life, without pushing or pressuring him, the brighter and more intelligent he will become, the higher IQ he will have as an adult (Sanderlin, 1979, p. 12).

Relating his experience in Japan in 1980, E. Paul Torrance, Alumni Foundation Distinguished Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Georgia, remarked that the United States should provide a great many more experiences to young children in developing physical, visual art, music, drama, dance, and team skills:

> I had been almost totally unprepared for what I saw in the 15 preschools that I visited. The physical skills, musical performances, art products, dramatic enactments, and skills of group cooperation were beyond anything I had seen before and beyond what I thought was developmentally possible. The performances were also accompanied by a quality of creative expressiveness and problem solving that I had thought was beyond the capability of children this age (3 to 6 years). Many people believe that emphasis on these skills accounts for the fact that there are no reading problems in Japanese schools and an almost total lack of illiteracy (Torrance, 1980, p. 12).

Early School Admission

Jacob W. Getzels, Professor of Education and Behavioral Science at the University of Chicago, discussed the suggestion that early identification of gifted children and subsequent early admission to school should be practiced, stating:

> The things that happen to a kid after he learns a language, say between three and six, are much more important than what may happen to him in any other three years of his life (Getzel, 1977, p. 328).

Assuming that schools might allow early admission for children identified as gifted, what happens to the child? Braga (1969) evaluated the success of 63 gifted children who were admitted early in relation to classmates who had similar IQs but were 7 months older. No special program was provided for the early admits, but they rated as well as their classmates on academic achievement tests as well as general behavior, work habits and teacher evaluations.

Public Commitment

Federal Commitment

Very few publicly supported programs include four-year-olds or five-year-olds —much less younger children of two or three years of age—even though the

federal statute—Public Law 95-561, Title IX, Section 902—specifies the inclusion of "preschool" children:

> . . . the term gifted and talented children means children and, whenever applicable, youth, who are identified at the *preschool*, elementary, or secondary level as possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, specific academic, or leadership ability, or, in the performing and visual arts, and who by reason thereof, require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school (Public Law 95-561, p. 151, emphasis added).

State Commitment

As the National Association of State Boards of Education stated regarding the assumption of "commitment" to the gifted and talented by the states:

> As of June, 1981, most states had demonstrated a commitment to the education of gifted and talented children through policies, special funding, and full-time personnel in the state department of education (Mitchell, 1981, p. 3).

It is noteworthy that in 1981—less than ten years since the Congressional Report of U.S.O.E. Commissioner Sidney Marland reported the desperate need for attention to the gifted and talented—more than ninety percent of the states have specifically earmarked funds for gifted and talented education. Even so, the states' allocation of funds to the gifted school-age child does not include attention to the preschool gifted and talented child under five years—the age at which the potential for growth is probably the highest.

Local Commitment

What happens at the local levels of government depends upon the school district, the citizenry, and, especially, on you, the parent who speaks out and demands that the needs of your child deserve attention and funds from local commitments. Through demands from parents, local funding has been earmarked to meet special needs of other students such as athletic, handicapped and pregnant students. Of course, parents need to choose the most effective ways to be heard. In these years of tight dollars, supporters of education for the gifted and talented —who represent only five percent of our total population—must present a case that is well-supported.

Identifying Giftedness in Very Young Children

Few preschool programs for the gifted enroll children below the age of three and one-half years of age. Of course, this is not because "giftedness" does not occur prior to three years but, rather, because identification of giftedness in extremely young children has only rarely been undertaken. Several obstacles to early identification—below the age of four years—are yet to be overcome. To begin with, in previous years children prior to three years of age have more often been at home with their mother. Observation of children's behaviors is necessary in order to design and administer tests. If the child is not usually in a public situation, observation and testing are much more difficult—except for family members.

Perhaps most important, the testing devices that have been developed for children under four years of age are not reliable, *i.e.*, when retested on a particular characteristic, the child does not consistently respond in the same way. Researchers believe that such lack of reliability may be due to the fact that, in very short periods of time, the factor being tested is no longer the same charac-

teristic in the child who is now a few months to a year older. Validity of the tests, *i.e.*, confirmation that test items are really testing what one intends to measure is, therefore, also in question.

Better methods of identifying the giftedness and talentedness of very young children must continue to be established. As much as possible, formal methods should be valid, consistently reliable, and predictive of future ability. They should test intellectual ability, academically predictive achievement, leadership, creativity, and visual and performing arts aptitudes.

With these caveats in mind, the following is offered as a resource for parents. It is a description of the methods currently being used to identify young gifted and talented children. They include formal tests of intelligence and achievement, some of which have been adapted for very young children. They also include questionnaires given to parents and teachers, as well as informal observations of children and use of any available records.

1. Observational Methods:
   (a) "Babybook" records—Parents often write down facts about their child's growth and development, such as the month the child first walked or talked.
   (b) Anecdotal records—Parents or nursery-school teachers often write short descriptions of something a child did or said that seemed unusual (compared to the sayings or doings of other children the same age).
   (c) Humorous events—Among the stories parents tell about unusual happenings involving their child are some which contain an inference that what is being recounted is hardly able to be believed even though it is true. Parents of gifted children often "know" their child has exceptional ability without recognizing or labeling it as such.

2. Checklist Methods:
   (a) Lists of the normal behaviors characteristic of a given chronological age.
   (b) List of developmental milestones organized in a sequence of age and stage levels.
   (c) Chronologically listed tasks that become increasingly difficult with advancing age.

3. Intelligence Tests:
   (a) Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test—The Stanford-Binet is a test of general intellectual ability. The test items are arranged by age level; at each age level, six tests are administered. They assess a variety of abilities such as vocabulary, memory, abstract reasoning, numerical concepts, visual-motor skills. The test is reported to be reliable at both lower and upper IQ extremes (Compton, 1980).

   (b) Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-R)—This is an individually administered intelligence test designed to test broad aspects of general intelligence. The WISC-R is divided into two main parts, a verbal scale and a performance scale, each including five mandatory subtests and one subtest which is usable as a supplement or an alternate. These 12 subtests (in order of administration) are:

Verbal Scale	*Performance Scale*
1. Information	2. Picture Completion
3. Similarities	4. Picture Arrangement
5. Arithmetic	6. Block Design
7. Vocabulary	8. Object Assembly

9. Comprehension
11. Digit Span (supplement or alternate)
10. Coding (or Mazes)
12. Mazes (supplement or alternate)

Vocabulary is often considered to be the best single measure of intelligence; block design is often considered to be the best single non-verbal measure of intelligence (Compton, 1980).

(c) **Weschler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI)**—This test is intended for use with children between the ages of four and six-and-one-half years. There are 11 subtests, 10 of which are used in computing the IQ. The subtests are listed below in order of administration:

Verbal Scale

1. Information
3. Comprehension
5. Arithmetic
7. Similarities
9. Vocabulary
11. Sentences (Alternate)

Performance Scale

2. Picture Completion
4. Block Design
6. Animal House
8. Mazes
10. Geometric Design

As on the WISC-R, verbal, performance, and full scale IQ scores are obtained.

(d) **Slosson Intelligence Test**—This is a brief, individual test of intellectual ability. It is a question and answer test; no reading or writing is required. The student is asked a series of short-answer questions covering content areas such as math reasoning, vocabulary, auditory memory, and information. The test was designed as a screening test, and hence is untimed. The content of the Slosson is limited to items that can be presented in a question-and-answer format; no performance tasks are included.

4. Vocabulary Test:

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)—This is a test of single-word vocabulary. The examiner pronounces a word, and the child selects the corresponding picture ("Show me the wagon"). The vocabulary words gradually increase in difficulty. It usually is used as a broad measure of receptive vocabulary.

5. Problem-Solving Tests:

(a) **Kansas Reflection-Impulsivity Scale for Preschoolers (KRISP)**—This is a measure of problem-solving abilities, particularly of the type of problem solving that leads to acquiring greater and greater knowledge. It consists of five practice items followed by ten test items. Each item involves matching a black-and-white line drawing of similar objects with its exact duplicate by choosing the duplicate out of four to six alternatives. Independent observers record the length of time for the child's response to the first choice as well as the total number of errors made until the exact duplicate is located.

(b) **The Preschool Embedded Figures Test (PEFT)**—The PEFT is a series of three practice items and twenty-four test items. The items are black-and-white line drawings of familiar objects embedding (or "hiding") a simple geometric form (an equilateral triangle). The young child who is able to find the hidden form is thought to be more analytical in problem-solving style (sometimes called "field-independence") and is considered to possess a higher level of cognitive or intellectual ability.

6. Achievement Test:

Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)—This test has been designed to provide a quick estimate of achievement levels in five areas: 1) mathematics; 2) reading recognition; 3) reading comprehension; 4) spelling; 5) general information. The PIAT combines short-answer and multiple choice questions; no writing is required. In general, reading recognition and total test scores are considered most reliable, and the spelling and reading scores are considered least reliable (Compton, 1980).

Summary of Programs and Their Methods of Identification

This list represents a range of possible methods which programs can use in selecting children. The listing is not exhaustive, but should give parents a good idea of the types of procedures commonly employed. Most programs use only a few methods, as can be seen in Table I that follows.

This table summarizes descriptions of sample preschool programs outlined in *Gifted Young Children* by Roedell, Jackson, and Robinson (1980). In addition to listing the identification and admission criteria used by specific programs, the summary also includes the age groups admitted, the major goals of each program, and how parents contribute to the programs. In the next section, one of these programs will be described in detail.

A few generalizations can be stated from the information in Table I. Parents will note that most programs do not try to identify gifted and talented children below the age of three years. Further, the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale is more frequently used as the basis for determining intelligence quotient (IQ) than any other measure. This test does claim to measure intelligence levels at two years of age. It is also noteworthy that academic achievements are more often listed as objectives of the programs than are the development of social and emotional capabilities. Creativity, leadership, visual and performing arts—competencies recognized within most definitions of the gifted and talented—are specified by only a few programs.

TABLE I

SELECTED PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Preschool Program	Ages of Children	Identification Procedures	Goals of Program	Parent's Role
Special Program for G&T Children, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas	2 to 6 years	IQ = 125+ Stanford-Binet Kansas Reflection-Impulsivity Scale for Preschoolers (KRISP) Preschool Embedded Figures Test (PEFT) Malone (adapted) Parent Q Abraham (adapted) Parent Q Renzulli (adapted) Teacher Q	Increased academic skills social-emotional acceleration self-control abilities	Parents' questionnaires in identification for admission G&T support group Liaison to Lubbock Independent School District
Seattle Country Day School, Seattle, Washington	3 to 12 years	Wechsler Preschool & Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) WISC-R Parent & child interviews Previous school interviews Social maturity level	Building foundation for academic skills	
Hunter College Elementary School (public) New York, NY	3 to 6 years	IQ - Stanford-Binet Leadership & creative qualities, esp. disadvantaged children	Academic skills Spanish facility as a second language	
Roeper School (private) Bloomfield Hills, Michigan	3 to 12 years		Affective competence Problem-solving Divergent thinking skills	
Gifted-Handicapped Preschool, Chapel Hill, North Carolina	3 to 6 years	Handicappedness and 1 year above norm in a G&T area Teacher's unstructured observations Checklists Structured observations by teachers Sociometric measures	Higher level thinking Music, art, recreational skills	Parents assist teachers in classroom & carry on activities at home
Astor Program (public) New York, NY	4½ to 5½ years	IQ = 132+ Stanford-Binet Social maturity interview Reflective responses Long attention spans	High level thinking Social cause/effect	In-home observation for identification of suitability for program
Child Development Preschool, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington	2 to 5 years	Specific cognitive skills IQ = 135+ Stanford-Binet WISC-R Block Design & Other WISC subtests Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test Seguin Form Board Numerical Memory subtest of the McCarthy Scales Reading Tests Peabody Individual Achievement Test Goldschmidt & Bentler's Concept Assessment Kit for Conservation	Increased achievement abilities Demonstration of social maturity in • independence • assertiveness • social sensitivity • making friendships • solving problems	Parent questionnaires for admission to program
RAPYHT Program (Retrieval & Acceleration of Promising Young Handicapped and Talented) Institute for Child Behavior & Development, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois	Preschool	Screening for handicappedness and IQ above 120	Increased academic skills for gifted handicapped preschoolers. Convergent, divergent, and evaluative thinking stimulated. Social-emotional development through music, art, dance	

How One Program Works

Identification and Selection

The Special Program for Gifted and Talented children at Texas Tech University is one of five programs in the Child Development Research Center at the University's Department of Home and Family Life, College of Home Economics. Since 1978, the Program has used measures described earlier to select children between the ages of two to six years for participation in the program. Three individual tests are administered to the child, the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale* (Form L-M, 1972), the *Kansas Reflection-Impulsivity Scale for Preschoolers (KRISP),* and the *Preschool Embedded Figures Test (PEFT).* In addition, parents complete two behavior checklists, *The Behavioral Identification of Giftedness (BIG),* and Abraham's *Checklist About Your Child.* Finally, a previous preschool teacher rates the child's behavior using a checklist called *Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Outstanding Young Children.*

Although the identification of preschool gifted and talented children is an ongoing process at Texas Tech, statistical methods were used to analyze the results of the original testing of 62 children, ranging in age from two years, three months to six years, four months. Based on the testing, 17 of these 62 children were selected for the program. The analysis of the testing results shows why these children were selected, but it also raises certain questions that will be of interest to parents.

In the three tests given to the children, the scores of the 17 gifted and talented children were significantly higher than the scores of the remaining 45 children. Stanford-Binet IQ scores of the gifted group averaged 137, compared to an average IQ for the normal children of 111. Errors on the KRISP were significantly fewer for the gifted children than for the normal children; but time-taken-for-problem-solving was not significantly different for the two groups. Correct identifications of the hidden figures on the PEFT were markedly higher for the gifted group.

When parents rated behavioral characteristics of their own child, the answers of the mothers—but not fathers—to the Malone Questionnaire (BIG) were different for the gifted group and the normal group. Neither mothers' nor fathers' responses on the Abraham questionnaire differentiated between the two groups. Other researchers have noted superior ability of mothers to evaluate their child's capabilities (Lendzion, 1974; Wolfensberger & Kurtz, 1971). Consistently (on all items but one), mothers of all 62 children rated their children higher than did fathers.

With this sample of parents, several factors may account for these results. The parents received no training regarding characteristics of gifted and talented children, and many fathers have less time to observe their preschool child than do mothers. In addition, the questionnaire may not be specific enough to focus on particular characteristics that would permit the parents to identify their children as gifted.

Teachers of the Child Development Research Center completed the Renzulli questionnaire for each child who had participated in each teacher's program. The teachers were unaware of the IQ scores of any of the children. With regard to the following six characteristics, these teachers were very effective in selecting potentially gifted/talented preschool children:

(a) Learning Characteristics,
(b) Leadership Characteristics,
(c) Musical Characteristics,
(d) Communication Characteristics—Precision,
(e) Communication Characteristics—Expressiveness, and
(f) Planning Characteristics.

They did not differentiate between the two groups of children in their observations regarding:

(a) Motivational Characteristics,
(b) Creativity Characteristics,
(c) Artistic Characteristics, or
(d) Dramatics Characteristics.

The difference between the parents' and the teachers' discrimination in the selection of children as gifted may be accounted for by several factors. To begin with, parents and teachers were asked to rate different aspects of each child's behavior: the items on the parents' Malone and Abraham questionnaires asked about parents, home and family experiences, and the items on the teachers' Renzulli questionnaire asked about school experiences. Also, parents were not specially trained to observe discrete behaviors, language, and other characteristics in their children. Although teachers received no special training regarding gifted and talented children's characteristics, they were master's or doctoral candidates in Child/Human Development, and therefore trained in observing and evaluating specific behaviors.

The Gifted and Talented Program for Preschoolers

The program for very young gifted children at Texas Tech does not, at first glance, appear to be much different from a more traditional preschool laboratory unit associated with a four-year instructional college. The schedule includes free play, circle time, learning centers, snack-time, outdoor activities, and sharing among faculty, student teachers, undergraduate students and children.

Each child's program of curriculum is based on tested or observed strengths. Plans are developed for each child based on objectives for meeting unique individual needs. Question and answer techniques create flexible and expansive opportunities for both the child and the adults involved in the program.

Individualized Programming. For the "free play" and learning centers portions of the program, the environment is always prepared to serve specific objectives for each child. Usually such preparations include materials and ideas designed to challenge at least three developmental levels, even though the chronological ages of the children may be very similar. For example:

> During the construction of a city made with large cardboard boxes, the children worked cooperatively although at different developmental levels. The younger children in the group worked very persistently at painting the boxes with large brushes and cutting doors and windows in the "buildings." The older children worked briefly with the painting and then moved on to more complex activities. Through cooperative "brainstorming," these children decided what the individual buildings should be in our community and began making signs for those designations as well as for the posting of the office hours or "hours of operation." Finally, the children worked out what the flow of traffic and parking areas should be and constructed and posted the appropriate traffic lights and/or signs.

Prereading and Prenumber Activities. All activities include opportunities for those children who cannot yet read or write, while encouraging the children who can represent ideas by use of letters or numbers to do so. For example:

> The children were divided into three groups according to their perceived developmental ages. Each group was shown the same picture and asked to "write a story" pertaining to the picture. A college student wrote down the sentences that the children used in telling their stories. The highest developmentally-aged groups helped with some of the actual printing. When the three groups were

finished, they all registered surprise that another group could look at the same picture and write a story different from the one they had written.

Leadership and Tutorial Experience. Each lesson plan is compiled so that children at higher developmental levels can become tutors for the children who are less advanced. This planning is based on the idea that both the tutors and those taught will benefit. For example:

> A hopscotch pattern was outlined on the carpet using masking tape. The first time it was presented the teacher explained the rules for the game. At this point only the oldest child in the group, Tucker, was interested in the activity. He played hopscotch for almost one hour perfecting his ability and learning the specific rules. The next week this same activity was available during the "free choice" time, at which time Marco and Kathleen, the two youngest children in the group, became interested in the task. This time Tucker became the "teacher" and when it appeared to him that they were unable to do successfully the task as presented, he altered some of the rules in order to allow them some success. The third time the activity was available, two other children decided to attempt it and again received instruction from Tucker. Both times when Tucker assumed the role of "teacher," the children being taught by him accepted and welcomed his help since they had observed his mastery of the task upon its first presentation.

Two Case Histories

Two examples from experiences of children who attended Texas Tech are indicative of what can happen later on when a gifted child is provided with this kind of education during the preschool years. In both cases, parents were very involved in the development and formal education of their children. In both cases, the parents were able to use the fact that their children had been selected for the preschool program to gain the flexibility their children needed from elementary school administrators.

> Eric was tested several days following his fourth birthday in 1978. His IQ score of 128 placed him at a mental age of just over 5 years. He read a book judged to be at third grade reading level, and he was solving mathematical problems at the second to fourth grade level. He talked animatedly about plants and animals—in conversation with his father, who is a farmer and builder. Admittedly, the IQ test did not seem to evaluate his mental structures as high as they were displayed in conversation with his father.
>
> When Eric left the program, his father requested that the school district place him in second grade—instead of first grade; the school system (after much discussion) placed him in second grade—even though he was smaller than other children of his chronological age and somewhat shy as compared to other five-year-olds.
>
> Now at 8 years of age, he is in fifth grade and results of recent achievement tests show that he is functioning at the top level in science achievement at grade 12.6, with his lowest level of functioning in language at the 7.4 grade level. Throughout his four years since the first evaluation at the Texas Tech program, his father has insisted at home and at school that he be encouraged to learn about special projects that interest him most as well as complete all assignments that were required of the other children. His social skills have seemed to develop congruently with his intellectual prowess. His father reported in 1982 as he entered fifth grade that the much larger and older children were more accepting of him than his chronological age-mates—and Eric, who was listening, agreed, "Yeah, I like the kids in my room!"

Sarah, entered the program with an IQ score above 135. Mother and father observation rated the child as a high-level achiever. Again, the father was particularly interested and supportive of the program and curriculum individually prepared for his daughter. Sarah was allowed early entry to the Lubbock Independent School District's first grade—after consultations between the preschool head teacher and the first grade teacher. During the 1981-82 school year, Sarah moved with her family to another state, where she was tested to determine appropriate grade placement. She was placed in the second grade for the 1982-83 academic year.

Whether or not Eric's and Sarah's IQ scores predict from four and three years of age, respectively, to adult IQ scores is not yet known. But the Stanford-Binet and other tests selected these children for admission to Texas Tech's gifted/talented program, their parents continued to provide support emotionally and with special activities in the home, and the children accelerated their performances. As Roedell, Jackson, and Robinson (1980) pointed out:

> IQ gains. . . can hardly be expected from a group of children whose mean IQ is already at the 99th percentile. Evaluation of academic achievement poses the same problem, with the added difficulty that academic achievement tests normed for preschool-aged children do not allow them to demonstrate the advanced academic skills of which they are often capable (p. 76).

As there has been so little follow-up study of gifted pre-schoolers, parents could write case histories of their own children and encourage pre-school programs to keep information files. Eventually, comparisons could be made between gifted children who participate in early entry and acceleration and those who do not.

20 Ways to Encourage the Potential Development of the Preschool Child

1. Become Knowledgeable About What It Means To Be "Gifted and Talented."

Find out what action you can take to help your child develop his or her full potential. Read all you can, observe all you can, interact as often as you can. Most of all, know what it means TO YOUR CHILD to be gifted. The exceptional talent may be unique and not usually observed in other children of the same age. See the chart that follows (Table II) for sample characteristics that may aid in identifying your child as gifted and talented.

2. Observe Your Child!

The earlier you discover your child's gifts and talents, the earlier you can encourage those capabilities. Since parents have more opportunities for closely interacting with their children during the early years, you more than anyone else can observe your child's interests, needs, typical responses, and unusual behaviors. Recording of observations—using checklists or noting anecdotally what the child did or said—provides useful information for evaluating the child's abilities (as well as providing you with pleasant memories years later).

3. Set Up A Family Council.

When a child's interests and needs are known, a family must decide which of these can best be given attention. Initiate a family council—father, mother, child—where you, the parents, and your child have a chance to be seen and be heard, and to hear and see each other. This might begin early—when your child is just beginning to talk and obviously wants to make some choices. (Of course, a family council can begin when a child is at any age.)

The choices offered to a child must be limited to what is appropriate for his or her level of maturity. For example, you might offer a choice between two items at two years developmentally, three items at three years, four at four years. You, as the parent, must use your years of experience to select opportunities that

TABLE II

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN from two to six years of age (samples of items are listed below)

INTELLECTUAL	ACADEMIC	LEADERSHIP	CREATIVITY	VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS
MALONE[1]	**MALONE**	**MALONE**	**MALONE**	**MALONE**
Does your child come up with common sense answers? Does your child try to figure things out by himself? Is your child a keen and alert observer? Does your child ask questions about things he wants to know?	How much does your child know? Less than others his age About as much as others A little more than others Is your child content with the outcome of things he does? Does your child want to know why things are the way they are?	Does your child lead when playing with other children? Does your child offer ideas & suggestions when playing with other children? Does your child like to organize people or activities? Does your child hold strongly to his beliefs?	How does your child most often describe something unusual? Doesn't describe things Tells what he can about it Uses hands, drawings, or sounds to help describe Compares it to other things he knows about	Does your child use big words? Does your child learn things from television or other performing sources?
ABRAHAM[2]	**ABRAHAM**	**ABRAHAM**	**ABRAHAM**	**ABRAHAM**
Does your child tend to put things together which are all the same in some way? Does your child arrange his/her toys and/or other possessions?	Does your child distinguish between quantities that are larger than others? Does your child show an interest in time—clocks, calendars, yesterday & tomorrow, and days of the week?	Does your child not want anyone to mess up his/her collections even though he/she doesn't always collect neatly? Is your child impatient about waiting for other children to catch up?	Does your child make up jokes? Does your child create make believe playmates while playing? Does your child show curiosity about how things work or how they are made?	Does your child enjoy continuing a conversation? Does your child show an interest in drawing? in music? in colors? Does your child keep time to music or other rhythmic sounds?
RENZULLI[3]	**RENZULLI**	**RENZULLI**	**RENZULLI**	**RENZULLI**
Is easily bored with routine tasks? Needs little external motivation to follow through in work that initially excites him? Often is self assertive (sometimes even aggressive); stubborn in his ideas? Looks for similarities & differences in events, people, and things?	Is a keen & alert observer; usually "sees more" or "gets more" out of a story, film, etc. than others his age? Has unusually advanced vocabulary for age level; uses terms in a meaningful way; has verbal behavior characterized by "richness' of expression, elaboration, & fluency? Likes to organize and bring structure to things, people, & situations?	Organizes his or her work? Tends to dominate others when they are around; generally directs activity in which he is involved? Seems to be well liked by his peers Excels in motor activities; is well coordinated?	Is sensitive to beauty, attends to aesthetic characteristics of things Can imitate others—is able to mimic the way people speak, walk, gesture? Tends to engage in original or elaborate fantasy play? Generate a large number of ideas ideas or solutions to problems & questions often offers unusual ("way out") unique, clever responses?	Is aware of & can identify a variety of sounds heard at a given moment—is sensitive to "background" noises? Easily remembers melodies & can produce them accurately? Likes to participate in art activities; is eager to visually express ideas? Participates in dramatic play in either guided or free-play activities? Uses voice expressively to convey or enhance meaning?

[1] Adapted from Charlotte Malone's BEHAVIORAL INDEX FOR GIFTEDNESS (BIG Scale) by Steele, C., & Gladden, S., 1978.
[2] Adapted from Willard Abraham's PARENT TALK on identification of giftedness in preschoolers by parents by Steele, C. & Gladden, S., 1978.
[3] Adapted from Joseph Renzulli's Scale for RATING BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SUPERIOR STUDENTS by Steele, C., & Gladden, S., 1978.

safeguard but allow appropriate freedom for your child. The choices must be acceptable to you, because once the child selects an alternative, the family should honor that choice. At the same time, at a family meeting, a child learns that not only his/her needs deserve attention but also that others have requests and needs deserving of consideration.

4. Communicate Openly With Your Preschool Child.

Positive and supportive communications are necessary—even when the feelings communicated are negative as well as positive. All children, but especially gifted and talented children, need to be able to communicate about the following:

- feelings of being different;
- ways to capitalize on one's strengths;
- ways to deal with criticism, sarcasm, differentness, giftedness, talentedness;
- excessive or unrealistic expectation of one's self;
- decisions to be made—*e.g.*, where to hang clothes, put away shoes, place own dishes; what special activities to pursue (ballet, science courses, football or soccer); or events to attend (museums to be visited).

5. Arrange Home/Yard/Play Facilities To Promote Exploration/Questioning.

Even young children feel pride in choosing their own space—a room or corner of a room for their collections of rocks, shells, or birds' nests, their preferred toys, projects, drawings, clay sculptures, musical instruments, etc. Children also enjoy having their own private place to play. Even a small plot of dirt out-of-doors provides opportunities for seeds to be planted, vegetables and flowers to grow, insects to be examined, water and sand play, rocks and wood piles, and an observation place from which to watch weather changes. From such exploration and questioning about nature and living things, young scientists may evolve.

6. Support A Program For Preschool Gifted/Talented Children.

An early childhood program for developing the potential of preschool gifted and talented children can become a demonstration model for the continuation of special educational programs through the early elementary grades. The Special Program for Gifted and Talented Children at Texas Tech has been supported by parents who have initiated a city-wide effort to establish a program for gifted children from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The use of multiple measures for identifying gifted preschool children and of individualized program planning for each child in the preschool program provides the basis for the Lubbock Independent School District's placement of the children from the Special Program into the public school classrooms.

7. Share Ideas With Other Parents And Educators.

Parents of gifted children find it helpful to talk with each other about their children's special needs, and often can work together to create more opportunities for meeting those needs. Beginning as a group of parents whose children were enrolled in the Texas Tech Special Program, the parent group invited the Lubbock Superintendent of Schools, principals of elementary schools, interested teachers, especially of the primary grades, and Texas Tech administrators to a meeting to discuss the means for a city-wide and school-wide educational program plan for gifted and talented children. Positive response from all parts of the community has resulted in a thriving, though beginning, program for the gifted.

8. Select The Best Teacher Available For Your Child.

You, the parents, are the single most important force in developing your child's potential. But the teacher who complements your work is crucial to whether or not your child's school experiences will be valuable. Furthermore, the teacher can be more beneficial in guiding you toward specific behaviors and responses that create a positive home environment for learning. For both the teacher and parents, essential qualities for encouraging a gifted child's abilities are:

- keen interest about a lot of things;
- an alert ability to observe behaviors, events, and language of young children;
- a sparkling sense of humor;
- empathy for the very young, unusually intelligent child;
- the ability to be flexible with time, materials, pace and schedule; and
- an ability to analyze, synthesize, and articulate your child's interests, needs, and abilities to others.

9. Arrange A Play/Work Group.

The best "program" for maximum development of your child's potential may be a small number of children playing, discovering, and asking questions about items that you provide for a play/work group in your own living room, basement, or back yard. Children's play—regarded by them as their "work"—can be guided through prepared environments that are easily as effective in your home as in preschool. Some of these "environments" could be:

- mixing and baking (cookies, pudding, casseroles);
- planting (vegetables, flowers), weeding, raking;
- housekeeping by both boys and girls (making the bed, cleaning and organizing the toy shelves, polishing silverware, folding or sorting and putting away laundry).

10. Provide Creative Responses To Your Child's Learning Needs.

Being in a preschool program or other educational setting such as a small play/work group may not even provide the potential for learning that you as a parent can offer to your child. It's the environment-for-learning that finally matters: "who" does it or "where" it is accomplished are the means to the ends you seek for your child. Please remember that much developmental progress occurs for everyone—and probably especially for very young children—in very informal circumstances. What sometimes passes as a small incident can be an important milestone for problem-solving and information-processing that is stored in memory for later use.

11. Visit Local School Board Meetings.

The educational goals you seek for your child's schooling are dependent upon the support (enthusiasm, commitment, attitude) of your local school board members. Although a program for the gifted can be developed by re-thinking where dollars best can be spent to produce a sequential developmental program for *all* children—rather than by allocation of large sums of money to special programming for gifted children only—funds are still needed to:

1. develop and evaluate individualized programs for gifted children with special interests;
2. train teachers how to initiate these individualized programs; and
3. research possible tests for assessing strengths in intellectual, leadership, performing arts, creativity, and academic achievement.

12. Volunteer To Serve As A Parent Representative.

As a representative of parents' concerns serving on a community or school committee, you can:

1. enlist the help of committed parents and local support groups that may make the difference in whether or not you can obtain funding for gifted and talented persons in your area;
2. urge that state dollars for education be allocated for local preschool and early elementary programs;
3. find out how your state and local school district are currently distributing funds for gifted education; and
4. if a competitive proposal must be written in order to obtain state funds for allocation to your school district, submit promising ideas for obtaining the dollars—ideas that you believe will capture the attention of the committee judging the proposals.

13. Insist On Adequate Training Of Teachers—Especially At The Preschool Level.

You will be working with teachers at the preschool level and all the way through school. You have become knowledgeable about what to expect from your child—by observation and interaction with your child, by your reading, and by discussing your child's behaviors, language and responses with other parents of gifted children. Research suggests to us that you, the parents of preschool children, are better judges of your child's giftedness than are most teachers (Jacobs, 1971; Ciha, et al., 1974). The teachers of gifted children need and deserve specific training in how to start individualized programs for each child during the early years—either within school or before formal education begins.

14. Encourage Teacher Training Institutions To Provide Specialized Courses And Degrees.

Universities' curricula are notoriously difficult to change very quickly. You, the taxpayer who pays the bills for higher education, can influence whether or not specialized courses are provided for training "teachers of the gifted and talented." Write letters to the deans of the instructional colleges with departments (home economics, education, psychology) that prepare and certify public and private school teachers. Tell them the qualifications needed to adequately train teachers of the gifted and talented. Necessary requisites for becoming a teacher of the gifted include the abilities:

- to be an open-minded, flexible "questor" for knowledge;
- to accept and promote the flourishing of divergent, creative, and expansive thinking;
- to be intensely interested in the dynamics of change;
- to be acutely aware of a child's uniqueness;
- to observe highly specific behaviors;
- to expend high energy output and *like* it;
- to be compassionate and empathic;
- to conceptualize how knowledge discovered in the group or by individuals can be channeled to allow individuals to progress through a hierarchy of learning levels—from knowledge to synthesis and evaluation (Bloom, 1956); and
- above all, to be a *learner*—in addition to being a teacher or parent.

15. Request Early School Admission—If Your Child Seems Ready.

Some researchers have found that entering school early seems to accelerate learning for the young gifted child (Hobson, 1949; Braga, 1969, 1971). It seems logical to insist that school boards realize that grouping for learning at *developmental age* (the age at which a certain behavior or characteristic is evident), *not* chronological age (one's birthdate), allows all children of similar developmental age to interact or perform together. When your child plays, works and competes with children of similar capabilities, he or she feels slight tension and challenge and usually finds learning a delightful experience. Feelings of competence and worth result.

16. Lobby State And National Legislators.

Parents are taxpayers as well as parents of preschool children. Contact your state and federal government representatives; let them know what programs are needed in your community at the preschool, elementary, secondary, and college/university levels. Request that information about legislation regarding "gifted and talented programs" be sent to you, with an indication of what action the official intends to take on it. By return mail or telephone call, indicate to legislator(s) your position on legislation. Communicate with your support groups and your local school board about what is happening regarding giftedness, and gain their backing for your position.

17. Identify And Use Community Resources That Support Gifted Education.

Certain civic and social organizations in your community can be contacted in order to enlist their support for gifted and talented education; examples include the Junior League and the League of Women Voters. These groups are powerful lobbying units with state and national legislatures.

18. Contact Industry/Corporations That Are Interested In Maximum Development Of Human Potential.

By viewing local commercials on television, you can begin to list the industries and corporations that might have a commitment to developing the brightest minds. These companies are strong contributors to the community's tax base,

and, therefore, to its educational system. Locate a supporter who can represent the community's gifted students and their need for local corporate funds that might be allocated for relevant discretionary programs.

19. Insist On A Second Evaluation Of Your Child—If You Think It Appropriate.

Some parents believe their child to be gifted and talented, but the child is not selected for the special program. If you observe in your child unusual characteristics of intellectual ability, leadership, achievement, musical or dramatic ability, or creativity—and if you really believe that he or she could profit from participating in a gifted program, insist that the testing, evaluation, and/or admission personnel reassess your child's abilities.

20. Continue Your Zest For Learning About Giftedness And Talentedness.

The systematic study of gifted and talented preschoolers and support systems that meet these children's needs is a relatively new one. Identification procedures are not well refined. All in the field are struggling to find new, fresh insights. Learning how to develop the peak potentials of extremely talented, very young individuals is only beginning. Your observations and contributions can continue to unravel the mysteries of the human personality and intellect.

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Issues for Parents: Selection of a Responsive Preschool Program for the Gifted Child

Mary S. Thormann

Introduction

Choosing an all-day educational setting for a preschool gifted child is often a difficult process for parents. One problem is that adequate testing to identify giftedness during the early childhood years is rarely available. In fact, some psychologists and educators believe that children cannot be accurately identified as gifted before the age of eight or nine (Whitemore, 1980). Thus, even though parents are usually the first to suspect the presence of unusual gifts or abilities in their child, it is often impossible to have their intuitions confirmed. Nevertheless, educational decisions need to be made, especially by parents who work and must arrange all-day care for their children.

Another difficulty is a lack of preschool programs designed to address the special strengths and vulnerabilities of gifted children. A recent national survey, reported by Karnes (1980), identified 113 existing programs at the preschool and primary level for gifted and talented. Of these *only five* programs admitted children below kindergarten age.

It appears that the responsibility for determining that their child's special needs are met is left to the parents of the gifted child. This means that parents need to be aware of the characteristics of gifted children, especially their special vulnerabilities; they also need to know what constitutes a quality educational setting. Day care that serves the best interests of a child offers a close match between meeting developmental needs and providing educational programming. Determining if such a match exists in a given educational setting becomes a very important task facing parents. It is the purpose of this paper to identify some of the issues and concerns related to this task and to provide some guidelines for evaluating the learning environment of a day care setting.

Affective Development

Programs for the gifted preschool child should include activities designed to foster growth in *all* developmental areas. Because of the nature of giftedness, it is useful to emphasize that children's development does not proceed at the same rate in all areas. Giftedness in one area, such as intellectual development, does not mean that a child will demonstrate advanced abilities in other areas, such as physical development or social development. Also, while rates of development differ from one child to another due to differences in inherited traits and in environmental opportunities, a developmental stage itself cannot be skipped.

This is especially important when considering the social-emotional area, otherwise known as affective development. The term "affect" is used to describe a child's self-concept, attitudes toward school and learning, social interaction skills, and other related learnings. There is widespread belief among early childhood educators that cultivation of young children's affect is of equal or perhaps greater importance than cultivation of their intellect (Goodwin & Driscoll, 1982). Others state the same idea in a little different way:

> . . . it is our position that the noncognitive experiences children have prior to school entry are major determinants of what they will learn in school, and what they are willing to learn. It is also our belief that the way the school and its teachers interact with children has a major effect on emotional and social development (Seagull & Kallen, 1978, p. 3).

Enzer and Goin (1978) wrote that:

> The emotional status of a child as well as his ability or inability to interact with others are major prerequisites for intellectual development (p. 17).

One of the most important affective experiences is the opportunity to play with friends or peers in a social context; this is termed "peer interaction." Hartup, one of the researchers who has contributed most to our understanding of the importance of peer interaction, states: "Most social scientists think of child-child relations as subordinate events in personality development. Peer relations, however,

contribute substantially to the development of social competencies in children" (1978, p. 1).

Opportunities to interact with peers and to learn how to get along are so important that a number of researchers have stated that it is possible to predict later mental health status on ratings of peer acceptance in childhood (Hartup, 1978). A greater incidence of emotional problems in adulthood has been found to be associated with poor peer relations in childhood. The significance of this for parents of gifted children is not to imply that intellectually gifted children cannot also be well-adjusted, but to remind parents of the importance of balance between opportunities for intellectual development and opportunities for social and emotional growth. To help parents nurture this balance, an alertness to the special vulnerabilities of gifted children is paramount.

Vulnerabilities Associated With Giftedness

It is important to focus attention on the peer relationships of gifted children because many times these children have difficulty socializing, not necessarily with adults, but with their own age-mates. As a result, a gifted child may be allowed to spend hours alone playing with blocks or involved in other solitary activities, but may not be given sufficient opportunities to develop socially.

Although it is common to think of peers as those of the same chronological age, in fact Hartup points out that children the same age differ greatly in size, intellectual capacities, physical skills, and social abilities. Thus, probably the best way to think of peers is that they may be at the same chronological age, and they may not. For the gifted child, it is likely that a peer in the intellectual area would be somewhat older; in the social area, a peer may be younger, or the same age, or older.

Gifted children have been found to have other vulnerabilities associated with their giftedness (Whitemore, 1980). For example, gifted children are particularly vulnerable to the emotional stress and social conflict that may result when children are required to adapt to environments that run counter to their inner needs. Many gifted children develop an unusual ability to concentrate and have a need to finish a task before beginning a new activity. Consequently, they find it very difficult to be in an educational setting where prearranged blocks of time are allocated for various activities. If a child is not allowed to finish a task, and if the child finds no emotional support for the *need* to finish the task, and if this represents a recurring pattern of how this situation is handled, negative attitudes may very well ensue. The fact that society tends to reward conformity only increases the burden on the gifted child who already is finding it difficult to adapt to situations requiring conformity. Long term stress of this nature can contribute to serious problems as the child gets older.

Another, related vulnerability of gifted children is their tendency to be perfectionistic. There appears to be an inner drive for perfection and when a task cannot be completed or completed to the child's standards, the child may withdraw, refuse to try, and become disinterested. It is known that gifted children tend to be highly critical of themselves. Parents also, without meaning to, sometimes push their child in various ways because of the giftedness. A child may be expected to excel in all areas. When children begin to sense failure and/or that they are being used to fulfill the parent's own ego needs, they may rebel, withdraw, or demonstrate erratic behavior. Of course, a tendency to project onto others as a means of coping with a sense of inadequacy and failure is very real, and parents need to be aware of that. What is needed is a learning environment that supports the child's development in all areas, yet reflects the special stresses to which the gifted child is vulnerable.

Another area of concern is the sensitivity of the gifted child. Gifted children tend to pick up cues, both verbal and nonverbal, very quickly. This can lead to a sense of social isolation because the attitudes and behavior of adults, including their nonverbal behavior, may communicate resentment or rejection to the child.

Also, social isolation from age-mates can result from name calling or expressions of envy. We cannot, of course, protect the child from these experiences but we can try to prepare him or her to cope with them. For example, name calling is perceived as a kind of social failure. Yet all sorts of failures are a fact of life. Parents should be alert to misbehaviors which may be indicative of the child's sense of inadequacy or social isolation. They should also help prepare children by teaching them to deal with the failure experiences in their lives. For the gifted child this is especially important because of the heightened sensitivities often associated with giftedness.

What to Look For in a Day Care Center

Schooling, especially during the early years, should support parents' desires and goals for the healthy development of their gifted child. Finding quality day care is often a very difficult process because of contraints of time, money, distance, and the limited resources of the center. Added to these considerations is the need for parents to find an educational setting that reinforces, outside the home, those values and attitudes that they are trying to teach at home. Learning how and what to observe in a day care center is critical, and for the parents of a gifted child it is further complicated by their child's special vulnerabilities.

The Day Care and Child Development Council of America has produced an excellent set of guidelines for choosing a day-care center. These guidelines are available from the National Association of State Boards of Education, 444 N. Capitol Street, Washington, D.C. 20001. The following chart summarizes these guidelines. It includes the observation categories, examples of issues for parents to consider and questions to help guide their observations.

The learning environment is divided into four major categories: the physical setting, the interactional setting, the program, and the social-emotional climate. For each of these categories, issues or areas of concern are described. Then, as a means of further defining the issues, groups of questions are posed to help parents make specific observations.

It is hoped that awareness of some special vulnerabilities of gifted preschool children coupled with guidelines for selecting day-care which is responsive to these vulnerabilities will assist parents in making more informed, and thus more satisfactory, day-care decisions.

SCHEMATIC DESCRIPTION OF OBSERVATION GUIDELINES FOR DAY CARE CENTERS[1]

A. PHYSICAL SETTING	ISSUES (EXAMPLES)	QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OBSERVATIONS
Ways in which the physical structure promotes individual developmental progress in physical, social, cognitive and affective areas.		
1. Use of Space	Consideration for the long day children spend in this environment, as reflected by spatial arrangement of the facilities.	What place is there where a child can get off by himself or herself and have some privacy?
	Suitability of room arrangement (and outdoor space), in relation to large group, small group and individual activity.	How does the setting change for the children during the long day? What provisions are there for more intimate groupings at certain times (during meals, rest, storytelling, early morning, late afternoon, before lunch)?
2. Materials	Balance between materials for structured learning tasks and those for open-ended learning activities.	Are there materials for structured activities (such as puzzles, counting boards, pegs, beads, dominoes, form boards, etc.) as well as materials for unstructured activities (such as paint, clay, woodworking, dramatic play, etc.)? Is there a balance or does one kind predominate? Which? Do most materials inspire children to thoughtful experimentation or do they merely lend themselves to perfunctory performance? (*e.g.*, a large wooden dump truck versus a wind-up toy.)
3. Timing	Appropriateness of time blocks for both the activities involved and the developmental level of the children.	Are there certain times that some events take place each day? Are these rigidly adhered to or is there some flexibility (*i.e.*, have a snack a little later because most children are still deeply engaged in a project, or a little earlier because children are tired after a trip, or go outdoors early because children are restless after several days of rain, etc.)? Describe. How do the children indicate whether there is enough time allowed for them to finish an activity or whether the time allotted is too brief?

SCHEMATIC DESCRIPTION OF OBSERVATION GUIDELINES FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships)	ISSUES (EXAMPLES)	QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OBSERVATIONS
Regard for the variety of learning which can only take place in an atmosphere of trust, pleasurable involvement and support for autonomy.		
1. Teacher-Child	Teacher's respect for children's ideas, feelings and abilities, as manifested by his or her interactions with them. Teacher's insights into and tolerance for the range of age-appropriate behaviors.	How does the teacher show tolerance of child-like demands, of impatience, mood swings, self assertion, negativism, impulsivity, exuberance, bragging, angry feelings, tears, testing behavior? How does she or he guide the children at such times toward adequate coping and acceptable behavior? Are questions raised with children that communicate a real interest in learning? (*e.g.*, "I wonder what will happen to the snow if we put it on the radiator?") Are the teacher's questions open-ended, thought-inducing questions or are they close-ended, *i.e.*, there is only one right answer? Are limits explained or does the teacher "lay down the law"?
2. Child-Child	Broad range of social experiences through opportunities to interact with children of different ages and from a variety of backgrounds. Heightened sensitivity to and appreciation of the ideas and abilities of others, based on (and contributing to) self-understanding and clear communication of intentions.	Describe the opportunities for meaningful interactions among children in this setting. Are groups kept reasonably intimate so children can get to know and enjoy each other, or are they so large that children are overwhelmed by the crowd, the noise and commotion? Note the importance assigned to sociability in this program: are interactions fostered, are children shushed or in other ways discouraged from relating, or are they left to their own devices? Do children tell each other about their experiences or demonstrate to each other a newly-learned skill? Is there opportunity to interact with children from a variety of backgrounds embracing different life styles? Is interest in and respect for differences manifested by introducing different foods, stories, holiday celebrations, music, attire, etc.? Are children encouraged to explore both differences and commonalities?

SCHEMATIC DESCRIPTION OF OBSERVATION GUIDELINES FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

B. INTERACTIONAL SETTING (Relationships)	ISSUES (EXAMPLES)	QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OBSERVATIONS
3. Staff	Functioning of entire center staff as an integral component of the total learning environment.	Is there visual or verbal communication throughout the day? Do the adults act upon this communication?
	Differentiated staffing patterns, considering professional competency and specific areas of personal effectiveness.	Are staff patterns arranged so that each person has regular times away from the children during the day?
4. Parent-Teacher	Encouragement and, to the degree feasible, incorporation of, parents' ideas and suggestions for the center's operation.	Do teachers keep parents informed about the program? Is there evidence of written and oral communications to parents? Is the daily schedule posted? Is there evidence of information about pending trips, class visits, etc.? Are reasons for classroom procedures shared with parents?
	Nature and extent of active parent involvement in the center; its effect on parents' interest in the program, on teacher-parent relationships and on the program itself.	How do teachers respond to parents' questions and comments? (Is there a back-and-forth sharing about the child and the program or does the teacher make pronouncements? Is the tone of the interaction respectful or authoritarian, concerned or detached, warm or abrupt, genuine or superficial?)
		What is done to stimulate parents' interest in the program when they bring and pick-up children?

SCHEMATIC DESCRIPTION OF OBSERVATION GUIDELINES FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

C. PROGRAM	ISSUES (EXAMPLES)	QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OBSERVATIONS
Ways the program helps children increase their understanding of self, other people and the world around them, and their ability to act on this understanding.		
1. Curriculum Content	Responsiveness of curriculum to the children's needs, interests, capacities and learning styles; appropriateness of program to developmental levels.	Which of the subjects, such as language arts, math, science, music, etc., are *ongoing* parts of the program; which are limited to definite periods, which cannot be observed at all?
	Program components geared to aid in problem solving, concept formation, symbolic representation and understanding of causal relationships.	Which of the program components build self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence on the part of the children (are mirrors used? are books made with children entitled, "Things I Have Learned To Do," etc.? are there photographs of children, height and weight measurements? do children care for pets, younger children? dictate stories about themselves? perform short chores? move freely to music? etc.)? Describe the modes and levels of symbolic play the children engage in. Note the variety of dramatic and creative expressions that are an ongoing part of the curriculum. What are some of the means used through which the children represent their ideas, experiences and concerns? (*e.g.*, blocks, woodwork, painting, dance, symbolic play, dictation of stories and poems, etc.)
2. Teaching Strategies	Affective supports for development of cognitive competence along a broad continuum. Sensitivity and appropriateness of teacher's responses to children. Their acceptance and validation of working processes, *per se,* as legitimate outcome of learning activities.	Describe teaching strategies most apparent in this setting. Note the match between: a) teaching strategies and competent functioning by the children and b) teaching methods and developmental needs of a given group. In what way does the teacher's guidance assure the kinds of feelings and attitudes that permit the children's concentration on the learning at hand? Are most activities initiated by children or by teachers? Is there a balance of both? Are children allowed to complete what they are involved in or must children stop at the same moment to do something else? What happens to those children who are "finished" while most of the others are still involved? How are children helped to move on when persevering in a task?

SCHEMATIC DESCRIPTION OF OBSERVATION GUIDELINES FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

C. PROGRAM	ISSUES (EXAMPLES)	QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OBSERVATIONS
3. Social-Emotional Climate	Respect for individual and group needs, as manifested by the "tone" of the place. Opportunity for children to become deeply involved in learning activities in the context of viable interactions. Freedom for children to make legitimate choices within clearly defined limits.	What evidence do children give of being aware of one another and of enjoying each other at least intermittently? Are natural choice groupings encouraged or does teacher frequently arrange for groups of children to play together? Is there an easy mix of group play and solitary play? Is there opportunity for quiet reflection as well as for exuberance? Describe. In what ways do teachers encourage children to help each other? Throughout the long day, are there many changes of pace or does the program remain essentially the same?

[1]Source: Mattick, I., & Perkins, F.J. *Guidelines for Observation and Assessment: An Approach to Evaluating the Learning Environment of a Day Care Center*. Washington, D.C.: The Day Care and Child Development Council of America, 1974.

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Issues for Parents: The Meaning of the "Information Age" for the Preschool Gifted Child

Ellen A. Herda

Introduction

Phrases describing the world today as an "information society" point to an important change taking place as the age of computers gradually replaces the industrial age. This technological progress in turn is bringing about changes in our economic structure and in our values and beliefs.

Though technological progress has undoubtedly solved some old problems, it also has created new problems in the areas of, for example, environmental pollution, energy depletion, inflation, unemployment and underemployment. To put this another way, our society continues to grapple with enormous and complex problems in spite of (and sometimes because of) our great technological advances. Yet we often persist in our belief that "solutions" will be found through scientific discoveries such as computers, telecommunication devices, or advanced x-ray machines.

It very well may be that solutions to these types of problems demand a different kind of thinking than the scientific thought that produces technological devices. What we may need are bold and imaginative ideas, developed by creative thinking patterns that look at problems from a global perspective. A global perspective emphasizes relating a problem to its broader context, rather than examining it in isolation. For example, the present trend in holistic medicine emphasizes the well-being of the entire person's physical, emotional and mental health, rather than just the part of the body that hurts. The implication of this for our progress as a society is that we may have undergone a primarily one-sided development of scientific knowledge and technological skills without a parallel development of concern for human and social affairs.

Parents of gifted and talented children have a special chance to influence our nation's future progress, for the abilities of their children are a highly valuable human resource. Helping children to develop their abilities is more critical today than ever before. Parents have the important role of creating an environment at home that is continually stimulating to children as they grow, and of playing and working with them, and listening and talking to them as their learning develops through new experiences. In this way, parents encourage children to become aware of and to maximize their own capacities, and to become problem solvers who can ultimately offer creative solutions in the world they will inherit.

To understand the context that has produced these needs in our society, an overview of current social and cultural changes is provided in Part One of this article. Part Two gives some suggestions for creating a home environment that emphasizes the development of certain skills related to this larger social environment: thinking and learning skills, language and communication ability, and creativity and imagination.

Part One: What Does Our Culture Look Like Today?

Today, many believe that our former ideas about progress and the "good life" are no longer viable. These ideas include the assumption that advances in technology would enable us to live easier and more fulfilled lives. Reliance on technological and materialistic advances has not, however, produced an end to poverty or economic problems, nor has it resulted in universally happy lives for individual members of our society.

Thus it is little wonder that people are asking serious questions about how to live a quality life. This is evidenced by the increased interest in the quality of the workplace, in the greater numbers of people joining social and spiritual organizations, and in the current focus on general health and fitness. These changes in values parallel changes in technology and the economy. A discussion of these three areas will provide, it is hoped, a global perspective on current trends in our society.

Technological Changes

Today we are experiencing a new communications revolution brought about by advances in technology. Just as earlier revolutions in communications—the development of human speech, the introduction of writing, and the invention of printing—led to new types of information and new ways of sharing it, so too, the rapid discovery of new communications technology is transforming society today.

Examples are all around us. Large numbers of people are now connected to information about the world through television and satellites. The expanding use of cable television, radio, telegraph, telephone, video tape, video discs, computers, and other telecommunications devices are intensifying interchange among people all over the world, as well as increasing the sheer amount of information available. The information is itself increasingly diverse and so are its sources.

A problem that all individuals and societies face today is the need for publicly interpreting such a large volume of information. Once we know all these facts, how are we to decide what they mean to us? Determining what information means is accomplished by discussing facts and negotiating ideas. The basic skill necessary for determining meaning is the ability to communicate effectively.

Communication skills include the ability to listen in addition to expressing oneself and articulating ideas. Those who communicate with ease and conviction will find that their interpretation of information has greater influence. Communicators who also understand the implications of their skills are in a position of greater potential influence than those who possess neither the skills nor the understanding.

Further, the role of parents goes beyond helping children to develop both skills and an understanding of the importance of communication. A specific skill can be practiced and rehearsed, but an appropriate attitude is acquired in a more subtle fashion. Yet it is no less important to develop realistic attitudes toward what technology can and cannot do.

A parent's attitude is seldom hidden from a child. We are living in an age that provides us with a multitude of technological conveniences, but technology in and of itself does not provide answers to questions or solutions to problems. Human values, judgment and communication cannot be replaced by any machine. Discussion of the implications of such a stance toward technology will encourage critical thinking and value testing by children starting at an early age. Such a discussion is particularly relevant in light of the electronic games and classroom computers with which children are so fascinated.

Economic Changes

Today we also are experiencing changes in the economy that are closely linked to technological change. We used to be a society that focused primarily on producing goods. But now we have become a society whose primary economic exchange consists of the buying and selling of services. Statistics provide a dramatic illustration of this trend. In 1920, 53% of the workforce worked in manufacturing, commerce, and industry, and 19% worked in information, education, and service industries. Today the corresponding percentages indicate that 29% of the workforce are involved in the production of goods, and 67% are working in services. By the year 2000, experts project that only 22% of the workforce will be in manufacturing compared to 76% in the information and service industries.

Out of these changes, a new kind of economy is emerging that relies on different kinds of resources and forms of production. For example, an economy that is based on manufactured products requires, creates, and depends on forms of energy such as electricity, oil, gas, coal and nuclear power. The emerging new service economy relies on technologies such as computers and videodiscs that, in

turn, rely more heavily on services and on economic activities. In a service economy, the emphasis shifts to the exchange of specialized skills for money or other skills, and these skills are, in turn, based on having certain information.

As we adjust to these changes, we will need to develop different ways of relating to people in our work and personal lives. Instead of the traditional authoritarian relationships, more supportive, egalitarian models become necessary. Everyone in society will have more access to information than they do at present, and this access will create a more equal basis from which to communicate. As a result, new interpersonal relationships will emerge within families, between workers and management, and between workers and clients or consumers.

It is important for parents to have an idea of these new directions within our economy for several reasons. The first is to help guide their child toward appropriate study and eventual career choices. The second is to provide an environment—in terms of organization of family life and attitudes and values modeled by the family—that encourages children to maximize their potential. Finally, parents can do much to help their children develop the skills that are most valuable in an information society; such skills include critical thinking and the use of creativity and imagination in problem solving.

To prepare children and adults for this new society, the very nature of learning itself must change. In an industrial society, "what" is learned is particularly important, because specific actions must be carried out to produce specific products. In an information society, however, the "what" is no longer as important as the "how." Children need to learn how to think, make decisions, solve problems, and use information. They need to know how to synthesize, interpret and negotiate the meaning of information, and how to apply their knowledge and creative thinking to finding solutions for practical problems.

In short, a learning society requires that learners become far less passive and both more active and interactive. Critical and creative thinking and communication skills become increasingly important, as successful interpersonal relationships and dynamic problem-solving become more integral to the functioning of an information and service-based economy.

Value Changes

Technological and economic changes are producing value shifts. Whenever any culture is in a period of transition, many people find it difficult to understand and accept the changes. This has been the case in our society for the past few years. The economic and technological changes are confusing and leave people feeling unstable and more vulnerable to foreign turmoil, financial difficulties, and changing definitions of "the good life."

Because this is a time when past visions of affluence have been curtailed, some people have begun to place less value on the material possessions made possible by technological advances. Correspondingly, a renewed emphasis on relationships among people and an increase in concern for commitment and cooperation appears to be gradually replacing the emphasis on expressing self that characterized the 1970s. Accordingly, developing the cooperative abilities of children and adults should be emphasized in response to these shifts in values.

As mentioned earlier, styles of problem-solving are changing too. Since many of our problems are social rather than technical in nature, we cannot rely strictly on scientific or mechanistic ways of thinking to resolve them. Today, there is an even greater need to include human and social-moral perspectives in our approach.

Thus it is important for problem-solvers to have an empathic identification with the everyday realities faced by ordinary citizens. It is important for them to be creative leaders who can inspire citizens at all levels of society to participate in

imaginative and holistic solutions. Growing citizen involvement in the problem-solving process already is resulting in the emergence of greater ecological awareness and a more holistic approach to education, health, and other areas of life.

Many of the gifted children of today will be the leaders and problem-solvers of tomorrow. They can make a great contribution by using their exceptional abilities to look for innovative solutions to our most serious problems. The world they will enter as adults sorely needs their skills if, as children, they are properly nurtured to become productive, creative people.

Part Two: Raising Gifted Children In An Information Society

Parents can create a home environment that responds both to the special needs of gifted children and to the social and moral problems we now face. A preschool environment should enhance the uniqueness of gifted children, who can differ markedly from their peers in abilities, talents, interests, leadership and psychological maturity. The pre-school years are formative years and they affect the way the child will learn for the rest of his or her life. After school begins, parents should continue providing a challenging home for their children, and should collaborate with teachers and administrators to help provide an educational climate that nurtures their child's special gifts.

In response to rapidly shifting societal conditions, parents can help their children to develop three key skill areas at home: a) thinking and learning, b) language and communication, and c) creativity and imagination. These skills are highly interrelated, but the following discussion will explore each in turn.

Developing Thinking and Learning Skills

There is considerable interest on the part of educators and the public in the way television watching influences how children learn and think. In our modern age, children spend more time in front of television sets than ever before. According to studies, children one and a half years old watch one and a half hours of television daily, and by the time they are nine they watch an average of five to six hours of television each day. Conservatively, researchers estimate that before the child enters first grade, 4,000 hours of television have been watched. And by the time they enter college, most students have spent many more hours watching television than they have in school.

How does TV viewing affect the development of learning and thinking skills? First, watching TV is predominantly a passive activity; during viewing, thinking tends to be non-critical because the child is merely receiving information. Unless parents intervene and promote some discussion after a show, children may rarely analyze or think critically about what they have seen. The discussions might focus on what or who the children liked best on the show, why they feel this way, and why they would (or would not) watch the show again. Parents should respond and participate as well. Such conversations encourage the development of a child's ability to analyze both information and feelings.

Second, teachers commonly complain that children *reared* on television viewing often have shorter attention spans and have difficulty staying on task more than eight or ten minutes. They give up easily if they find the project too difficult or are unable to obtain an instant response. Instead of searching for their own answers to problems, they tend to want answers provided for them about what to do. Many of these pre-schoolers have a difficult time distinguishing reality from fiction and have trouble creating original stories; instead, they tend to relate what they have seen on TV.

Parents can counter these unproductive trends in several ways. First and most obvious, they can cut down on the number of hours their children are allowed to spend watching TV. Second, they also can provide their children with other activities in which to become involved besides television. Third, when their children

are watching TV, parents can help make television a tool for learning and teaching by helping them to develop critical viewing skills. Some suggestions for accomplishing this are offered below:

1) Encourage your child to talk about a television show both to stimulate interaction between you and your child and to provide a context for reviewing ideas and values that you may or may not want your child to grow up learning.
2) Teach children how TV can distort the real world by helping them to test what is viewed on the screen against their own experiences. This is particularly important because many shows depict people unrealistically.
3) Help your child become aware that there may be a difference in the value that one sees on TV and their own values or the values you are trying to teach. For example, seeing a wholesome breakfast portrayed as one that includes sugar cereals may confuse a child whose parents are attempting to teach the avoidance of sugar as an additive in the diet.
4) Help your child distinguish between the show and the commercial, so the child learns to differentiate between information and propaganda. Many commercials directed toward children use a format similar to the cartoon the child may have just seen. Start with a comparison between a documentary for children and the commercial that follows it, as there is a noticeable difference between this kind of show and a commercial. Then work up to the more subtle difference between other shows and commercials. Many shows are based on propaganda and you can teach your children to think critically about what they see on TV.

Parents also should encourage their child to become a good listener. Be aware of the things children are particularly interested in and nurture this curiosity. When children are curious, they want information and, at least for a few moments, are eager to listen. But unless the information is presented in a challenging way, their curiosity may wane. Communicate through the way you answer questions that your child's interests are important. Try to spark further curiosity through your answers, but avoid providing more information than the child has the interest or capacity to absorb. When you notice your child's curiosity or attention span dwindling, it's time to change the subject. To foster your child's learning, begin with what the child is obviously curious about and work through to other interests from there.

Many resources for teaching very young children are available to parents who seek them out. A few examples are offered to help motivate parents to undertake such a search, and to inspire them to create activities of their own. To encourage the development of critical thinking skills, parents might ask hypothetical questions like the following (adapted from Scott, 1968):

What would you do if you found some keys on the playground?
What would you do if you broke Grandmother's best cup when she was not in the room?
What would you do if, after you had built a fine tower out of blocks, someone came along and knocked it over by mistake?
What would you do if you were having lunch at a friend's house and you were served something you didn't like?
What would you do if someone went ahead of you in line when you were taking turns at jumping rope?

The following is an example of a "high-interest" activity (adapted from Scott, 1968).

Here are some words which may help stimulate discussion and arouse the child's interest quickly, since many of the words are close to the child's experience.

love	warm	scream
tears	win	dream
fight	bad	mad
scared	bath	lick
ugly	lazy	yell
hug	kiss	tough

You can have your child draw pictures describing the words, and often you can tell through discussion of these pictures what dreams and difficulties the child is experiencing.

Here are some examples of questions designed to elicit responses which will require reasoning (adapted from Scott, 1968):

- How do you know when you are catching cold?
- How can you tell an orange from a ball if your eyes are shut?
- Why don't you play ball with an egg?
- Why wouldn't you give a tiny baby an apple to eat?
- Why do you water flowers and not rocks?

Developing Language and Communication Ability

You help children to develop language and communication skills every time you engage in conversation with them. By the time children are two, they need to begin learning how to use language effectively in communicating with others. It is through verbal exchange that children become sensitive, investigative and thinking individuals. Developing these language skills is crucial in today's information society.

Since parents are the first teachers and models for their children, they need to take an active, supportive role in encouraging verbal responses. This means providing the child with continuing aural and verbal stimulation. Parents should remember to speak carefully, slowly, plainly, and with a tone of voice that demonstrates genuine interest.

Parents also can provide a variety of language learning experiences to encourage their children's interests, such as play, poetry, physical movement and listening activities. Examples are included at the end of this section. A child begins learning to read when the parent reads while the child follows the picture in the book. When the very young child asks questions, parents should answer using action and sense words the child can readily relate to.

Then when the child is older, the answer should nurture the ability to reason. Since a gifted child often is able to reason much earlier than the average child, parents should encourage the development of reasoning and thinking processes as soon as possible, by asking questions and urging the child to make observations, recall experiences, use his or her imagination, or ask questions.

These verbal exchanges combat some of the questionable effects of television, such as the rapid shift of images that tends to produce a poor attention span. Rapid-fire presentation of visuals on television, 30-second commercials and fast dialogue often hold the attention of the child so effectively that there is no time to process, or think about, the information. Neuman (1980) found that pre-schoolers could keep track of less than 50% of the content on brief sequences. But if parents cover this ground in conversation with their child, the

child can preserve much more of the information in memory. This is important because the development of the memory is a critical aspect of language acquisition.

The story and poem which follow are examples of activities designed to develop listening and expressive language skills (adapted from Scott, 1968).

The Strange Noise

The boys and girls were resting on the floor. They were lying on a rug. It was ever so quiet. It was so quiet that you could hear an insect buzzing on the window sill. It was a very good time to think.

Suddenly there was a noise.

It was a soft noise, a strange, small, noisy noise.

"Listen!" whispered Bobby.

"Listen!" whispered Susie.

"Listen!" whispered all of the children.

The teacher said softly, "Let's think about the strange noise. Let's guess what is making the strange noise. Let's find out where the strange noise is coming from."

The children asked questions about the strange noise.

"Can you ask a question about it?" (Responses.) They tried to guess what was making the strange noise.

"Do you have some guesses?" (Responses.) "Shall I tell you, then?"

"It was a shiny black cricket with gauzy wings and strong black legs rustling around in the wastebasket looking for something to eat.

"Can you make up a good ending for this story?" (Responses.)

Cats' Eyes

Say: "Cats have good eyes and they can see in the dark."

"Cats' eyes are small when it is light,
But they are round and bright at night."

Hold a mirror behind a candle. Say: "What happens to the light?" (Responses.) "It looks bigger and brighter. Cats have eyes that shine at night." Bring a cat into a dark closet. Notice how its eyes shine. Discuss.

Encouraging Creativity and Imagination

Nurturing creativity and imagination in the child, particularly the gifted child, is especially needed. The gifted child often possesses exceptional imaginative strength. Imagery serves a major role in developing thinking skills, and in stimulating artistic, creative, and leadership talents. The imagination also contributes to the functioning of higher mental processes such as problem solving and, as a result, plays an important role in developing an individual's reasoning and critical thinking skills.

One of the best ways parents can encourage their child's imagination is through play, particularly through fantasy play, or "let's pretend." Fantasy play usually revolves around favorite themes of young children. Common props include doctor and nurse equipment, action-figure dolls, trucks, airplanes, soldiers, boats, and prehistoric animals. Ideally, parents should let children generate themes themselves, so they are choosing themes they like.

One difficulty many parents have with fantasy play is the preference young children have for repetition. Children have a need to re-create certain play situations many times. Most grown-ups are quickly bored in repetitive settings and find it uncomfortable to play with pre-schoolers for long periods of time. When adults and children are playing together, it is the adult who may have the shorter attention span. To reduce some of the monotony, parents can combine the child's interest in repetition with variations on a single theme.

Here are some other ideas for maximizing the benefits of play:

- Spend a few minutes each day in play with your pre-schooler, rather than a long play period once or twice a week.
- Choose a play time when you are fresh, not feeling fatigued.
- Be aware of recurring patterns in your play sessions, and use this information to structure subsequent play sessions for maximum interaction and enjoyment.
- Take advantage of play time to present yourself as a role model for your child.

As long as parent and child are having fun while creating their make-believe world together, this type of play is far more productive for a child than a structured game. Children have less power than an adult in games oriented toward rules. Often parents will decide to cheat in favor of their young opponent, not with the idea of teaching the child dishonesty but rather to make the child feel powerful. In fantasy land, however, the child is controlling events imaginatively.

Researchers at the Parent-Child Lab at Arizona State University found that parents who engaged their four-year olds in fantasy play for ten minutes each morning and evening for a week noticed *important changes* in their child's behavior in comparison to the following week when they did not engage in such play. Significantly, their child was six times less likely to misbehave when they engaged in fantasy play. This finding suggests that fantasy play may meet certain power needs for children, removing some of the motivation to misbehave.

Play sessions also can be used to enhance your child's vocabulary. Talk to your child as you play, and use the period following play to discuss the child's play experiences. Incorporate key words the child may encounter in daily life or on television into play sessions, so your child acquires new meanings and becomes more familiar with common words.

The following list offers hints for making the most of make-believe activities (adapted from Labuda, 1974).

- Have children enact a scene from a story such as *Peter Rabbit:* Pretend to be rabbits crouched behind an imaginary fence, eyeing Mr. McGregor's every move, waiting for his watchful eye to disappear, giving the signal that it is safe to wriggle under the fence.
- To eliminate unpleasant situations, set limits: "Let's find a place for turning our rope so that it will not bump anybody" allows freedom, sets standards, and establishes a precedent for future actions.
- To provide a rich source of satisfaction in "being the cause of" something, guide a child so that he or she will understand what caused his or her success: Have him or her move in to an imaginary garden as Peter Rabbit, making absolutely no sound. The child may say something like, "You know, my feet were so quiet I couldn't even hear them myself."
- Permit each child to experiment: Honor the child's request to "Let me do it a different way."
- To open inspiration channels, encourage verbalization: Ask children what they think should happen, have them act out one another's ideas.

- To help children gain insight into another person, provide viewing experiences: Let a shy child observe other children pretending to be Mr. McGregor. Eventually, the shy youngster may say, "I bet now I could be Mr. McGregor and scare 'em out, huh?"

Conclusion

In summary, there are many methods you can use to stimulate your child to make better use of his or her abilities. The preschool years are extremely critical to the way children will develop when they reach school age and beyond. Without the proper training, potential skills and abilities can be lost, and for both the gifted and for society, this loss can be especially tragic. Given the challenges we face today, we have a pressing need to take advantage of what the gifted child can contribute to society when he or she grows up to be a creative, productive adult.

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Conclusion: Emerging Issues in the Field of Preschool Gifted Education

Shirley Perkins

Despite the increased attention to the gifted that we have witnessed in the last decade, the proliferation of specialized programs in local school systems across the country has not been matched with comparable options for the preschool child. Consequently, the growing body of knowledge and wisdom regarding the nurturance of giftedness tends to emphasize the academic needs of the school-age child. The articles in this monograph expand the literature on the very young gifted child and, in doing so, contribute to narrowing the gap between the concerns voiced by parents and educators and the available insights and information.

As in the other areas within this field that we call "gifted education," new knowledge and experience brings with it new questions and concerns. The area of the preschool gifted is no exception. It is the hope of the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted that this monograph will lessen the echoing of questions between parents and educators that occur when too few practical answers are available. It is also hoped that the collection of articles will give timely focus to some issues needing further attention. The following areas invite early consideration.

Nurturing Exceptional Abilities

Steele and Gladden have provided the reader with a comprehensive overview of the program offered for the young gifted and talented child at Texas Tech University, and a summary of similar programs in other institutions. Yet access to such formal educational programs continues to be rare. Undoubtedly, efforts must be strengthened to foster the development of programs like those described. Observation and evaluation guidelines such as those cited in Thormann's paper provide a basis for such efforts in a variety of pre-school settings.

Likewise, attention should be directed toward providing parents with skills and resources for nurturing the abilities of their young children within the context of their day-to-day interactions. How can parents encourage and respond to the inquiries of young children about subjects with which they have little experience or expertise? How can parents informally provide experiences for their children that extend beyond the interests and abilities of an individual family? Can some of the techniques used by teachers of the gifted to develop questioning skills, creative thinking, self-directed learning, and effective use of community resources, for example, be adapted to help parents of the gifted to nurture similar abilities? Both Herda and Sapon-Shevin and Shevin reinforce the urgency of such questions for parents of *all* children in the "information age" now upon us.

Everyday Advocacy

Attention to advocacy for the gifted has focused largely on group efforts to effect changes in governmental and educational systems. This work is essential in accomplishing the long-term changes that can influence the lives of many gifted children in the future. Yet the wealth of information and advice available to the would-be advocate gives too little attention to effective advocacy by an individual parent for an individual child. It might be enlightening to discover how many political activists who have successfully navigated the adoption of a new school board policy, the appropriation of special funds, or the enactment of new legislation, have found themselves unable to bring about a minor change that could enhance their own child's life.

All too often, advocates push for the adoption of a "gifted program" with too little understanding of the specific tasks involved in mounting a systematic effort. They are therefore unable to advocate for a single appropriate modification that would benefit their child. Yet several small changes may combine to yield results that match those produced by a single major change. Parents and educators can become more effective advocates by increasing their sensitivity to the potential influence of specific small changes, and by increasing their skill in promoting such changes for individual children.

Parents As a Resource

A still under-utilized resource in understanding the complexity of the young gifted child is the parent, singly or in combination with other parents. The parents of preschool children who typically come to the attention of educators are those who are puzzled over how to deal with the exceptional ability they suspect, or who have deep dissatisfaction with the options open to them. For all these vocal and visible parents of young gifted children, there must be many more who quietly and effectively nurture their children's abilities. Systematic ways to tap the combined wisdom and knowledge of these largely silent parents should be developed and implemented.

The contributors to this monograph and the members of the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted offer this publication with the expectation that it will provide both educators and parents with fresh insights and will invite further collaboration in the quest to better understand the dimensions and implications of exceptional abilities in the preschool child.

Appendix I:
Resources for Parents

Organizations

American Association for Gifted Children, Inc. (AAGC)
15 Gramercy Park
New York, New York 10003
212/473-4266

The activities of this national, non-profit organization include support for and development of seminars and publications related to giftedness and education of the gifted. Membership is open to lay persons and professionals.

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091
800/336-3728; in Virginia call 703/620-3660

This national organization is a major resource for parents and professionals interested in gifted and talented education. Their activities include a large number of publications, including CEC Fact Sheets, and the membership organization: "The Association for the Gifted" (TAG).

Gifted Advocacy Information Network (GAIN)
225 West Orchid Lane
Phoenix, Arizona 85201
602/944-2324

This organization seeks to facilitate a nationwide information and advocacy network of persons concerned about and involved with gifted education. They provide information to their membership on issues such as advocacy methods, federal-level activity in gifted and talented education, and state programs.

Mensa Gifted Children Program
4817 West Kirk
Skokie, Illinois 60077
312/677-4518

This organization has established a nationwide network of coordinators to disseminate information on programs and to encourage the establishment of programs for the gifted.

National Association for Gifted Children
217 Gregory Drive
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901
501/767-6933

This organization has a major emphasis on the advancement of research in the area of gifted education. The organization also provides information about giftedness and advocacy, and assists in the development of local and state groups to promote gifted education.

National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented
316 West Second Street, Suite PH-C
Los Angeles, California 90012
213/489-7470

This organization sponsors a variety of training and technical assistance services through workshops, conferences, and seminars on giftedness. They also produce publications on a range of topics related to gifted and talented education.

Newsletters and Journals

Chart Your Course
PO Box 6654
Mobile, Alabama 36606

Magazine written by and for gifted, talented and creative children.

Exceptional Children
The Council for Exceptional Children
Department 6503
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091

The official journal of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

Gifted Children Newsletter
Gifted and Talented Publications, Inc.
1255 Portland Place
Boulder, Colorado, 80323

Monthly newsletter for parents.

G/C/T
PO Box 6654
Mobile, Alabama 36606

General magazine for parents and teachers.

Gifted Child Quarterly
160 Monroe Drive
Williamsville, New York 14221

Official journal of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC).

Roeper Review
Roeper City and County School
2190 North Woodward
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48013

Journal on gifted education.

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"Nurturing Academic Talent in Early Childhood: Science." Cat. #1403.007.
"Nurturing Creative Talent in Early Childhood." Cat. #1403.008.
"Nurturing Leadership Talent in Early Childhood." Cat. #1403.009.
"Nurturing Talent in the Visual and Performing Arts in Early Childhood: Art and Music." Cat. #1403.010.

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Services and Programs

To help parents in their search for further information and/or specific programs, the following list provides addresses and telephone numbers for programs and personnel in the field of education for the gifted. Below the name of each state, the reader will find listed the office of their State Director of Programs for the Gifted.

On the right, the reader may find information about university programs that offer services to parents of preschool gifted children, such as: testing of a child for giftedness, answering parents' questions or offering guidance in other ways, recommending or providing written materials about preschool giftedness, and/or actually operating a preschool program on campus.

This information was obtained via a questionnaire, and there may be other programs not included in this compilation. Many responses were received stating that no programs were available for very young children. Parents who find no resources listed for their state or city should contact their State Director who may know of other programs and services.

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
Alabama: State Consultant for Gifted Programs Alabama State Department of Education 868 State Office Building Montgomery, AL 36130 205/832-3230	Teacher Education Program Education of Gifted & Talented Building #1, Suite 157 University Station Birmingham, AL 35294 205/934-7520 materials available
Alaska: Office of Exceptional Children State Department of Education Pouch F Juneau, AK 99811 907/465-2970	
Arizona: Education for Gifted/Talented Division of Curriculum & Instruction 1535 West Jefferson Phoenix, AZ 85007 602/255-5008	Project for the Study of Academic Precocity Arizona State University Tempe, AZ 85287 602/965-4757 testing, parent guidance, preschool program, materials available Graduate Programs in Education of the Gifted Department of Special Education University of Arizona Tucson, AZ 85721 602/626-3248 parent guidance, materials available

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
Arkansas: Administrator Programs for the Gifted/Talented Special Education Section Arch Ford Education Building Little Rock, AR 72201 501/371-2161	
California: Program Manager/Gifted Education 721 Capitol Mall Sacramento, CA 95814 916/322-5954	Department of Special Education California State University, L.A. 5151 State University Drive Los Angeles, CA 90032 213/224-3711 preschool program (summer)
Colorado: Gifted/Talented Student Programs Colorado Department of Education 201 East Colfax Denver, CO 80203 303/866-5271	
Connecticut: Consultant, Gifted/Talented State Department of Education P.O. Box 2219 Hartford, CT 06115 203/566-3695	Yale Child Study Center Yale University 333 Cedar Street New Haven, CT 06510 203/785-2508 testing and evaluation Cooperative Education Service 11 Allen Road Norwalk, CT 06851 203/847-3873 materials available
Delaware: Programs for Exceptional Children State Department of Public Instruction Townsend Building Dover, DE 19901 302/736-4667	College of Education University of Delaware Newark, DE 19711 302/738-2333 testing
District of Columbia: Coordinator, Gifted Education Seaton Elementary School, Room 311-A 10th & Rhode Island Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20001 202/673-7054	

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
Florida: Bureau of Education for Exceptional Children Knott Building Tallahassee, FL 32301 904/488-1106	University of South Florida College of Education HMS 464 Tampa, FL 33620 803/974-3410 testing, preschool program (Saturday)
Georgia: Programs for the Gifted Department of Education State Office Building Atlanta, GA 30334 404/656-2425/6316	Department of Home Economics Georgia College Milledgeville, GA 31061 912/453-4372 preschool program
Hawaii: Educational Specialist, G/T Office of Instructional Services Department of Education, #805 1270 Queen Emma Street Honolulu, HI 96813 808/548-6414	
Idaho: State Department of Education Len B. Jordan Office Building 650 West State Boise, ID 83720 208/334-3940	
Illinois: Gifted Education Coordinator Educational Innovation/Support Section State Department of Education 100 North First Street Springfield, IL 62777 217/782-3810	Department of Special Education Northeastern Illinois University 5500 N. St. Louis Chicago, IL 60621 312/583-4050 testing, parent guidance, preschool program
Indiana: Gifted/Talented Education Department of Public Instruction 229 State House Indianapolis, IN 46204 317/927-0111	Indiana State University Terre Haute, IN 47809 812/232-6311 Porter School Psychology Center: testing University School: parent guidance Department of Educational Psychology Butler University Sunset Avenue Indianapolis, IN 46208 317/283-9286 testing, parent guidance

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
Iowa: Consultant, Gifted Education Grimes State Office Building E. 14th & Grand Avenue Des Moines, IA 50319 515/281-3198	Project Pegasus Department of Child Development Iowa State University Ames, IA 50011 515/294-5612 testing, parent guidance, preschool program, in-service training, parent newsletter, other information Gifted Program, Early Childhood Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction Room 628, Education Center University of Northern Iowa Cedar Falls, IA 50613 319/273-6396 testing
Kansas: Education Program Specialist-Gifted 120 E. 10th Topeka, KS 66612 913/296-3866	Department of Educational Psychology #123 Wichita State University Wichita, KS 67208 316/689-3325 developing services
Kentucky: Program Manager, Gifted Education 1831 Capitol Plaza Tower Frankfort, KY 40601 502/564-2106	
Louisiana: Gifted/Talented Programs State Department of Education P.O. Box 44064 Baton Rouge, LA 70804 504/342-3636	Center for Gifted Children P.O. Box 43251 University of Southwestern Louisiana Lafayette, LA 70504 kindergarten program
Maine: Coordinator, Gifted/Talented State House Station #23 Augusta, ME 04333 207/289-3451	
Maryland: Senior Staff Specialist Gifted/Talented Education State Department of Education 200 W. Baltimore Street Baltimore, MD 21201 301/659-2312	

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
Massachusetts: Programs for Gifted/Talented Massachusetts Department of Education Bureau of Curriculum Services 1385 Hancock Street Quincy, MA 02169 617/770-7237	
Michigan: Specialist, Gifted/Talented Education Michigan Department of Education P.O. Box 30008 Lansing, MI 48909 517/373-8793	School of Education Grand Valley State Colleges 350 Ottawa, N.E. Grand Rapids, MI 49506 616/456-6277 testing, parent guidance, preschool program Department of Special Education Western Michigan University Kalamazoo, MI 49008 616/383-1680 testing, parent guidance, preschool program, materials available
Minnesota: Program Specialist in Gifted Education State Department of Education 641 Capitol Square St. Paul, MN 55101 612/296-4072	Children's House Mankato State University Mankato, MN 56001 507/389-1516 parent guidance, kindergarten program Graduate Studies in Education and Community Service College of St. Thomas St. Paul, MN 55105 612/647-5839 resource library
Mississippi: Consultant, Gifted/Talented Special Education Section P.O. Box 771 Jackson, MS 39205 601/354-6950	

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
Missouri: Gifted/Alternative Programs State Department of Elementary & Secondary Education P.O. Box 480 Jefferson City, MO 65102 314/751-2453	
Montana: Specialist, Gifted/Talented Office of Public Instruction Helena, MT 59620 406/449-5660	
Nebraska: Programs for the Gifted State Department of Education 301 Centennial Mall South Lincoln, NE 68509 402/471-2446	
Nevada: Nevada Department of Education 400 West King Street Carson City, NV 89710 702/885-3140	
New Hampshire: Consultant, Special Education State Department of Education 105 Loudon Road Concord, NH 03301 603/271-3741	
New Jersey: Consultant, Gifted/Talented State Department of Education 225 West State Street Trenton, NJ 08625 609/292-8412	Institute of Child Study Kean College of New Jersey Union, NJ 07083 201/527-2380 testing, parent guidance
New Mexico: Coordinator, Gifted Education Special Education Division State Department of Education State Education Building Sante Fe, NM 87503 505/827-2793	
New York: Specialist, Gifted Education State Education Department Room 367 EBA Albany, NY 12234 518/474-5966	

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
North Carolina: Chief Consultant, Gifted Education Division of Exceptional Children State Department of Public Instruction Raleigh, NC 27611 919/733-3004	Graduate Program in Gifted and Talented Education School of Education University of North Carolina Greensboro, NC 27412 919/379-5044 parent guidance, materials Appalachian State University Boone, NC 28608 704/262-2224 Dept. of Special Education: parent guidance Early Childhood Learning Center: preschool program
North Dakota: Special Education (Gifted/Talented) Department of Public Instruction State Capitol Bismarck, ND 58505 701/224-2652	Campus Lab. School Division of Education and Psychology Minot State College Minot, ND 58701 701/857-3120 parent guidance, preschool program, materials
Ohio: Programs for Gifted/Talented Division of Special Education 933 High Street Worthington, OH 43085 614/466-2650	Gifted Child Registry Ohio State University 356 Arps Hall 1945 N. High Street Columbus, OH 43085 614/422-8787 parent guidance, materials College of Education and Human Services Wright State University 322 Millett Hall Dayton, OH 45435 513/873-2332 parent guidance, preschool program
Oklahoma: Gifted/Talented Section State Department of Education 2500 N. Lincoln Boulevard Oklahoma City, OK 73105 405/521-4287	Applied Behavioral Studies North Murray Hall Oklahoma State University Stillwater, OK 74074 405/624-6040 parent guidance

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
Oregon: Gifted/Talented Specialist 700 Pringle Parkway SE Salem, OR 97219 503/378-8460	
Pennsylvania: Coordinator Gifted/Talented Programs Penn-STAR 1013 West Ninth Avenue King of Prussia, PA 19406 215/265-3706	
Rhode Island: Program Manager School/Community Partnership 235 Promenade Avenue Providence, RI 02908 401/277-2825	
South Carolina: Programs for the Gifted 1420 Senate Street Columbia, SC 29210 803/758-2652	Department of Education and Psychology Converse College Spartanburg, SC 29301 803/585-6421 testing, parent guidance
South Dakota: Gifted/Talented Programs Special Education Section Richard F. Kneip Building Pierre, SD 57501 605/773-3678	Special Education Department Black Hills State College Spearfish, SD 57783 605/642-2406 testing, parent guidance
Tennessee: Coordinator, Gifted/Talented 132-A Cordell Hull Building Nashville, TN 37219 615/741-3659	Special Education and Counseling University of Tennessee 615 McCallie Avenue Chattanooga, TN 37402 615/755-4368 testing, parent guidance, preschool program, materials available
Texas: Chief Consultant Gifted/Talented Education 201 East 11th Street Austin, TX 78701 512/475-6582	Gifted Education Training Program Department of Special Education Texas Woman's University Box 23029 Denton, TX 76204 817/382-5536 testing, parent guidance, materials available

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
Utah: Gifted/Talented Education State Board of Education 250 E. 5th South Salt Lake City, UT 84111 801/533-6040	Department of Special Education 214 MBH University of Utah Salt Lake City, UT 84112 801/581-8443 materials available
Vermont: Chief, Elementary Curriculum State Department of Education Montpelier, VT 05602 802/828-3141	
Virginia: Special Programs for Gifted/Talented Division of Special Education State Department of Education P.O. Box 6Q Ninth Street Office Building 9th & Grace Streets Richmond, VA 23216 804/225-2070	School of Education University of Virginia 140 Ruffner Hall 405 Emmet Street Charlottesville, VA 22903 804/924-0791 testing, parent guidance, preschool program Education Department George Mason University Fairfax, VA 22030 703/378-7271 testing, preschool program Preschool Paintings as Indices of Intelligence Special Education Programs Norfolk State University Norfolk, VA 23505 804/623-8736 *or* 804/423-0775 *or* Art Therapy Program George Washington University Washington, DC 20037 202/676-6285
Washington: State Director, Gifted Education ESD #113 601 McPhee Road, SW Olympia, WA 98502 206/754-6733	

STATE State Director Contact	PRESCHOOL GIFTED RESOURCES Services/Materials Offered
West Virginia: Programs for the Gifted 337 B, Capitol Complex Charleston, WV 25305 304/348-7010	
Wisconsin: Gifted/Talented Programs P.O. Box 7841 125 S. Webster Madison, WI 53707 608/266-3560	School Service Bureau LLC 207 University of Wisconsin Green Bay, WI 54302 414/469-2480 parent guidance, preschool program, materials available GIFTS Institute for Talented Students Department of Counseling and Guidance University of Wisconsin Third Floor, Education Building 1000 Bascom Mall Madison, WI 53706 608/262-2878 testing, parent guidance, materials available
Wyoming: Language Arts/Gifted/Talented Wyoming Department of Education Hathaway Building Cheyenne, WY 82002 307/777-6238	College Lab School College of Education University of Wyoming Laramie, WY 82071 307/766-3145 testing, parent guidance

Resource Contacts in the U.S. Territories

American Samoa Gifted/Talented Education Pago Pago, AS 96799 011-684-633-5237 (Overseas Operator)	**Trust Territory** Equity Programs Trust Territory Office of Education Office of the High Commissioner Saipan, CM 96950 (Overseas Operator) 160 + 671 + Saipan 9312, 9428, or 9319
Guam Associate Superintendent Special Education Department of Education P.O. Box DE Agana, GU 96910 011 + 44 + 671 + Local Number: 472-8906, 472-8703, 472-9802	**Virgin Islands** State Director of Special Education Department of Education Box 630, Charlotte Amalie St. Thomas, VI 00801 (809) 774-0100, Ext. 271

Appendix II: Council for Exceptional Children Fact Sheets on Giftedness

The Preschool Gifted and Talented Child

Produced for the Office of Gifted and Talented, US Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare by the Council for Exceptional Children.

Who is the preschool gifted and talented child?

The preschool child, ages 2-5, who functions significantly above age level in language development, cognitive and social skills, physical adaptability, creativity, or leadership may in fact be gifted and talented. Criteria for identifying preschool gifted and talented children may be specifically defined by state or local guidelines.

Is early identification and education of value to the preschool gifted and talented child?

There are strong indications that much of a person's mature intelligence is developed between conception and 4 years of age. Therefore, it is important that the young gifted and talented child be exposed to a high quality learning environment as soon as possible. Learning environments should be designed to meet the unique needs of each child, and the child's indication of readiness to learn should be a determining factor in the type of challenge presented. It is important to remember that demonstration of advanced ability in one area does not necessarily mean similar levels of competence in all areas.

How can a preschool gifted and talented child be identified?

If a standardized intelligence test is to be used as a part of the identification process, it should be administered by a professional who is experienced in working with preschool children. A child with advanced skills may not have been exposed to the types of experiences necessary for superior performance on a standardized IQ test.

Tests should never be used exclusively to determine children's potential ability for assessing cognitive development. Techniques such as those developed by Piaget may effectively supplement standardized measures. Teacher checklists, parent observations, and peer nomination procedures are all helpful in identifying gifted and talented children.

What are teacher checklists?

If a child is enrolled in a preschool program, the teacher will have many opportunities to observe those characteristics and behaviors that may indicate exceptional ability. Some of the characteristics that a teacher could observe in gifted and talented preschool children are:

- The use of advanced vocabulary for their age.
- Employment of spontaneous verbal elaboration with new experiences.
- The ability to construct interesting or unusual shapes or patterns through various media, such as blocks, play dough, and crayons.
- The ability to assemble puzzles designed for older children.
- A sense of humor used in general conversation.
- An understanding of abstract concepts, such as death and time.
- Mastery of new skills with little repetition.
- Demonstration of advanced physical skills.
- Demonstration of advanced reasoning skills through the explanation of occurrences.

The use of a checklist that includes these and other characteristics can be of great help in alerting teachers to potentially gifted and talented children.

What should parents be looking for in observing their children?

Parent observations can assist in the identification of preschool gifted children. Parents are able to supply developmental information and other data not readily observable in more structured situations. A child's approach to dramatic play, constructive play, and humor can provide a great deal of information regarding the child's level of cognitive development. Intensive interaction among young children takes place during less supervised and less structured play situations and therefore, should be included as part of a comprehensive identification process. Observation should take place when children are free to choose activities either alone or with others and when they have access to a variety of materials. Free play behavior should be observed for periods of approximately 15 minutes. Include at least one indoor and one outdoor observation. Make observations for several days and record them for future reference.

Some questions which may guide parent observation are:

- *Dramatic play*. Do your children ever engage in make believe play in which they pretend or simulate situations and people? Which best describes the variety in your children's dramatic play? (a) have one favorite theme which they use almost all of the time, (b) have two or three favorite themes which they like to vary but generally stick with, or (c) have a wide range of themes and enjoy variety.

- *Constructive play*. Do your children ever engage in play in which they make things, build things, or draw? When they are free to build or make things, what do they make? Which statement best applies to the products of your children's constructive play? (a) attempt to make products as representative of reality as possible, (b) products have some representation to reality but have some unique aspects as well, or (c) draw or make things as they remember them or as they would like for them to be with little attention to perspective, proportion, or relationships.

- *Humor*. Which statement best describes your children's ability to perceive humor? (a) make little or no attempt to do or say funny things, (b) attempt to do or say some funny things primarily to imitate what they have seen others do, or (c) can take information and use it to produce creative humor which is new for them.

Why should information from a child's peers be considered?

Children's perceptions of their peers can be a revealing source of information. Therefore, nominations of children by their peers should be included in the identification process, especially at the preschool level. To find out how children who possess unique abilities are perceived by their peers, the following types of questions can be asked:

- Which child in class can make a broken toy work?
- Who in the class can make up the best new game?
- Who is the very best at following directions?
- Who asks the most questions?

How can parents help meet the needs of the preschool gifted and talented child?

Parents can help meet the needs of their preschool gifted and talented children by providing them with a wide variety of experiences. Take children to museums, airports, and the library. Play new games, do experiments, engage in sports, together. If your child is enrolled in a structured educational or enrichment program, parent participation, input, and support are vital to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of the child. Parents are their child's first teachers and,

therefore, have a responsibility to provide that child with secure, quality learning environments.

Prepared by Gail Hanninen, Panhandle Child Development Association, Inc., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and John Grossi, The Council for Exceptional Children.

The material in this fact sheet was prepared pursuant to Contract Number 300-76-0530 from the Office of Gifted and Talented, US Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the US Office of Education and no official endorsement by the US Office of Education should be inferred. (1/78)

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Parents of Gifted and Talented Children

Produced for the Office of Gifted and Talented, US Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare by the Council for Exceptional Children.

What is a good working definition of gifted and talented?

The US Office of Education has identified six areas in which children may demonstrate capabilities of high performance or giftedness:

- General intellectual ability—the all around bright child.
- Specific academic aptitude—the math or science whiz.
- Creative or productive thinking—the child who comes up with novel solutions to problems.
- Leadership ability—initiates and leads games and groups.
- Ability in the visual or performing arts—painting, music, drama, and sculpture.
- Psychomotor ability—athletic ability and mechanical skills

A gifted child may have one or more of these abilities. One leading educator defines gifted and talented children as those who have learned to use the symbol systems of our society at a much higher and more effective rate than other children. However, a parent leader offers a less technical definition, saying gifted and talented children do things a little earlier, a little better, a little more quickly, and a little bit differently from other children. Parents also gather much useful information by observing the behavior of their children.

What are some behaviors or characteristics to look for?

- Gifted children learn to read earlier often before entering school and sometimes on their own and with a greater comprehension of the nuances of language.
- They usually have large vocabularies for their age.
- They learn basic skills more quickly and need less practice.
- They display an ability for abstract thinking in advance of their peers.
- Their concentration and attention spans are longer.
- They often have a wide variety of interests and experiment with them.
- They have a highly developed sense of curiosity and a limitless supply of questions.
- They are good guessers.
- They can construct relationships between things that are not readily obvious.

- They can retain a lot of information.
- They usually relate well to peers and adults.

Many behavioral checklists for gifted and talented children are available. Check with your school system or with one of the resources listed in this monograph for assistance in securing a checklist.

How is a gifted and talented child identified?

Several sources of information should be used to identify gifted and talented children, such as reports from teachers, parental observations, pupil products, school achievement, standardized tests of intelligence and creativity, case studies, and other measures.

My children have been identified as gifted and talented. What can I do at home to encourage them?

- It is important to provide a variety of stimuli and experience geared to the child's natural interests. Books, toys, stories, puzzles, and games are obviously helpful, but you should also take care to provide materials and experiences that enrich imagery, challenge the child's abilities, and encourage the development of perceptual and motor skills.
- Encourage your children to record their ideas in some way. Parents can sometimes play secretary.
- Permit ample time for thinking and daydreaming. These are the child's equivalent to a full time job.
- Assign household tasks that coincide with interests.
- Encourage your child to translate their interests into specific products, *e.g.*, stories, pictures, collections, inventions, tools. Be a cautious editor. Budding creativity does not stand up well to stifling in the name of correctness.
- Accept and use the tendency to see things differently.
- Encourage active rather than passive learning.
- Play word games. Common settings like shopping and shared chores provide occasions for all kinds of word play.
- Do not be anxious about single mindedness—"All she cares about is horses!" This, too, shall pass.
- Develop the habit of asking your children as many questions as you are asked. For example. "What would happen if...?" "How does it work?" "How would you change it?" "What else can you do with that?" "Why?" "What will it be like a (week, month, year) from now?"

My children are gifted and talented but they seem turned off and tuned out. What's going on?

A gifted and talented child is a child first and gifted and talented second. Like all children, they need and respond to the love, caring, interest, and guidance of their parents. Sometimes, however, being gifted and talented becomes a burden, especially if the children's environment does not meet their needs and expectations or if peers react negatively to their abilities. They may act out frustrations in the form of disruptive behavior, become insecure, or withdraw. It is not uncommon for gifted and talented children to achieve at levels lower than their capabilities if lack of challenge in school produces disinterest. Meeting these problems will require a cooperative effort between parents, school officials, and in some cases, a professional counselor.

What about programs in the schools?

Many schools have programs for gifted and talented children, but they are not always appropriate for every gifted and talented child. Program administrators and teachers can help you decide. If no program exists, you may want to think about helping to start one or consult with teachers to see what can be done to meet your child's special needs within the regular class.

Is there an association or group I can join?

There is probably a state level association for parents of gifted and talented children in your state or in a large city near you. Address inquiries to your state education agency's consultant for the gifted and talented.

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Sue Gladden is currently a graduate assistant in the Home Economics Department of Texas Tech University with a major in Child Development. She has recently completed her master's thesis on the identification of the preschool gifted child. Ms. Gladden has spent four years as the head teacher and evaluator of a preschool gifted program, and is a regional representative to the Texas Association for Gifted Children.

Ellen A. Herda, Assistant Professor at the University of San Francisco, School of Education, teaches Sociocultural Foundations of Organizations, and School, Community and Society. Prior to university teaching, Dr. Herda worked with various research and development projects for exceptional children including the coordination of teaching programs for the gifted. Her current research and writing are in the area of cultural, technological and policy changes in organizational settings, and the development of human creative potential.

Shirley Perkins, previously the State Consultant for the Gifted in both Iowa and Florida, is a free-lance consultant in gifted education. A past teacher of the gifted, Dr. Perkins is conducting work in educational policy development in the area of gifted education.

Mara Sapon-Shevin is currently the Project Director for a Dean's Grant entitled "Collaboration of Regular Educators for Mainstreaming" at Cleveland State University. Previously an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dr. Sapon-Shevin has done extensive work in the area of mainstreaming and is particularly interested in cooperative teaching and in teaching children about the individual differences among themselves.

Mayer Shevin, Assistant Professor for Specialized Instructional Programs, Cleveland State University, is involved in teacher preparation at both the preservice and inservice levels. Previously a psychologist for severely and profoundly handicapped children, Dr. Shevin's areas of expertise include early childhood special education, particularly the role of parents and families in the education of special needs children.

Connie Steele is Assistant Professor and Chairperson for the Department of Home and Family Life, College of Home Economics, Texas Tech University. In addition, she directs the Child Development Research Center which includes an educational experience program and a research project involving gifted and talented children aged 2-6 years. Dr. Steele is also currently on the Advisory Board to the Lubbock Independent School District for the initiation and development of a gifted and talented program for grades K-2.

Mary Thormann is currently Director of Graduate Programs in Education and Human Resource Development at Marymount College of Virginia in Arlington, Virginia. She is founder and former director of the Gerard Majella Child Center, a preschool facility serving children from 2 through 6. In addition, Dr. Thormann has been involved in research for Head Start programs and in teaching children and adolescents with special education needs.

Other Publications on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children

An Administrator's Guide to the Education of Gifted and Talented Children

By Joyce Van Tassel-Baska

In a concise, to-the-point manner the author outlines the key issues, action steps for setting up a program, and considerations for building an exemplary gifted program. $7.50 per copy prepaid.

An Advocate's Guide to Building Support for Gifted and Talented Education

Edited by Patricia Bruce Mitchell

This manual for advocacy was written by six persons with extensive experience in selling gifted programs to administrators, legislators and board members. Critical information on what works and what does not work is explained for all aspects of advocacy from organizing parent groups to giving testimony at legislative or school board meetings. $7.50 per copy prepaid.

A Policymaker's Guide to Issues in Gifted and Talented Education

Edited by Patricia Bruce Mitchell

This unique publication outlines four basic steps for developing policies for gifted and talented educational programs, issues to be considered, and decisions to be made in laying the framework for gifted programs. Current policies and programs in other states are presented in an overview article and through a series of detailed profiles on six states. $7.50 per copy prepaid.

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